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In this Issue

The global dimension of the conflict changes and war taking place in the Eastern Partnership space allows one to argue about the contradictory transformation of modern international and regional relations into a different state, which is quite different from that which was typical in previous centuries. On the one hand, new international and regional relations are characterized by a greater degree of rationality, which is manifested in the desire of global and regional actors to regulate international relations based on their own interests. On the other hand, there is a growing spontaneity emanating from international and regional relations itself. At the same time, spontaneity and chaos develop to a certain extent as a counterbalance to the tendency towards rationalization or orderliness. The interaction of rationality and spontaneity accelerates the transformation of interstate relations.

Despite the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is universal in nature and is designed to equally draw the attention of the world community to the problems of all states without exception, it nevertheless emphasizes the special responsibility of developed countries for the future of the developing world, where there is currently a critically high deficit investment in key social and economic Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Under these conditions of comparative analysis, research on the topic of regulation and leadership seems relevant in terms of identifying recent trends in the South Caucasus. A comparative study of the issues of stability and instability in international relations is of paramount importance, since they play a world-system role and influence the ability of international relations to adapt to constantly changing conditions. Therefore, the main attention in the articles of this volume was paid, first of all, to the theoretical and methodological dimensions of regulation and leadership in modern international and regional relations.

In 'The History of Imperial Politics and the Politics of Imperial History', Gerard Libaridian analyzes one of the main trends in modern political history and historiography, mentally relying on certain ideas and concepts of the empire and often correcting or even rethinking them. As a result, a mosaic, but at the same time a completely integral portrait of the empire is formed throughout its historical existence. The imperial paradigm made significant adjustments to the views of historians, which primarily meant a shift in the focus of attention from the center to the periphery of the empire, to the problems of national identity, as well as to the peculiarities of state-building in the imperial situation. The author focuses on the contradictions in the common history of the Turks and Armenians in the context of the geopolitical past of the Ottoman Empire, primarily the factors of stability that allowed it to successfully manage its numerous peoples over the centuries. At the same time, the geopolitical approach of imperial research plays an important role in this article, allowing the history of the Ottoman Empire to be placed in a global context.

In his article 'The US, Strategic Environment in the South Caucasus and Armenia: A sight on the future', Ruben Elamiryan analyzes the current directions of US foreign policy in the South Caucasus in the context of the ongoing transformation of the balance of power in this region. According to the author, an essential feature of American politics is the integration of regional strategic mechanisms in various geopolitical contexts. At

the same time, understanding the mechanisms for developing an American strategy towards Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia is impossible without taking into account a number of domestic political factors and understanding the doctrinal guidelines of the United States. The main US foreign policy concepts in the South Caucasus are focused on the implementation of national interests through global dominance through the developed strategic environment in the region. The author emphasizes that a number of internal political factors have a significant impact on the foreign policy of the countries of the South Caucasus, which does not always correspond to the national interests of these countries. The political analysis of these is a promising direction in the study of US foreign policy towards Armenia, where the main focus is shifted from the analysis of the results of foreign policy activities to the consideration of internal processes to develop decisions that determine this activity.

In 'US policy in the South Caucasus prior to and after the 2020 Karabakh war in the context of the evolving regional and international geopolitics', Benyamin Poghosyan analyzes the transformation of US policy in the South Caucasus, pointing to the strategic position of this region on the border between European and Asian space. The author comparatively analyzes the main US geopolitical changes in the South Caucasus before and after the 2020 Karabakh war. The strategic interests of many countries are concentrated in the South Caucasus, and in addition, this region is a geopolitical space for expanding the influence of leading powers in the Near and Middle East, as well as in the Caspian and Black Seas. The author pays attention to the fact that the South Caucasus can act as an important link between the West and the East, being traditionally linked by close ties with European countries and the states of the East. However, after the 2020 Karabakh war, this region became a zone of armed conflicts, turning it into one of the centers of the clash of global international interests. The article attempts to explore the geopolitical role of the United States in the transformation of Armenia's relationship with its neighbor countries, as well as regional powers. The challenges facing Armenia due to the Azerbaijani and Turkish blockade, the Karabakh war of 2020, as well as the revision of the implementation of foreign policy tasks in the South Caucasus and beyond, all this makes it important to study the US regional policy towards Armenia.

In the article 'An Alternative to the Dissident Paradigm and Intersecting Civil Protests in Soviet Armenia: Equal but Different?', Armenak Manukyan examines the main areas of emergence of dissent, civil protests and political groups in Soviet Armenia from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. The author pays attention to the ideology of dissidents, despite the common criticism of the socialist system, it did not have a well-defined single doctrinal concept, since it included several different ideological currents. At their core, representatives of various dissident ideologies did not directly raise the question of the advisability of changing the political system of the Soviet Union, believing it possible to achieve the declared changes within its framework. According to the author, this position was largely due to the fact that the most influential dissidents interacted with the Soviet government for quite a long time, receiving from it favorable working conditions, awards, etc. In addition, the status of the Soviet Union as a state in the international arena was quite significant, being a member of the UN Security Council, one of the largest world powers, and individual violations of human rights could not change the international status of the Soviet Union in the UN, and even more so if these

appeals came from civilian groups that were in an illegal position in the USSR. The author draws attention to the main mechanisms of dissident activity in Soviet Armenia, which were: 1) the collection and dissemination of information prohibited by the authorities; 2) preparation and distribution of open letters in defense of illegally convicted or devoted to topical problems of the social and political life of the country; 3) creation of dissident organizations; 4) demonstrations; 5) production and distribution of leaflets and prohibited literature; 6) moral and financial assistance to persons subjected to repressions and their families; 7) hunger strikes.

In 'Drivers of Fiscal Resources at the Local Level in Russia: Role of Institutions Reflected in Regional Debt', Evgeny Timushev analyzes the implications of fiscal institutions and the centralization of intergovernmental fiscal relations in Russia, focusing on issues of regional debt sustainability and intra-regional fiscal decentralization. In the context of increasing instability in the post-Soviet space, both in the economic and political spheres, the issue of ensuring economic security deserves special attention. The emerging destabilizing tendencies of the national economy of the Russian Federation, which deepened against the backdrop of the transition to a multipolar world, accompanied by an increase in structural imbalances in the world economy, necessitated the development and adoption of effective measures to prevent and minimize the consequences of crisis phenomena, the search for new methods and levers of influence in the field of sustainable development management, appropriate changing environment. According to the author, a characteristic feature of the regions of modern Russia is a high level of differentiation in development, which exacerbates the impact of adverse factors on the regional economy. The largest share is occupied by subsidized regions, whose economy is more prone to destabilizing trends, which increases the burden on the federal budget. Many of them have significant resources, which, with effective management levers, can increase their share in the development of the domestic economy. The analysis showed that the current administrative, economic, social instruments of regional management often do not take into account the specifics of the territory, are non-systemic and unrelated, and do not have sufficient scientific validity.

In his article 'Gender-sensitive approaches in confidence- and security-building measures', Hakob Gabrielyan offers a new perspective on solutions to include gender-sensitive approaches in arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. The effective use of the potential of citizens of post-Soviet countries in public policy and management is hampered by the double standards that exist in post-Soviet society, when equality of rights and opportunities for people of both sexes is officially recognized, but rejected in everyday practices based on traditional ideas about the roles of men and women in the family and society. This is especially evident when pursuing a policy of human resource management in organizations of all types and forms of ownership, including government agencies, when, other things being equal, preference in promotion is given to men. Both at the level of ordinary mass consciousness and in the social sciences, there is an underestimation of the significance of the positive effects of the policy of equalizing the opportunities of gender groups and their access to all types of resources.

This volume of the journal includes three book reviews focusing on the resilience and sustainable development of the EU, security transformation and the new balance of power doctrine, as well as issues related to reconciliation, heritage and social inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa.

In the context of the transformation of the world-system, the EU is a new center of power, influencing regional and geopolitical political processes. Therefore, the EU, its institutions and processes are of interest to most researchers who care about the future. At the same time, it should be taken into account that these integration processes within the EU are the only ones of their kind, and, therefore, unique in terms of the practical implementation of ideas that have worried great minds for many centuries. The global scale of the transformation of security and the radical nature of the ongoing changes allow many researchers to put forward an assumption about the formation of a new system of international relations, as well as a new doctrine of the balance of power. In parallel with these processes, many provisions and phenomena that characterize the very system of international relations are being revised. Including one of the basic principles, foundations of this system is the sovereignty of the modern state, as one of the key actors in international relations. The relevance of a comparative analysis of the Middle East and African vectors becomes even more significant if we take into account the growing involvement of geopolitical actors in the processes of reconciliation, heritage and social integration in the Middle East and North Africa.

Ashot Aleksanyan
Magda Arsenyan

THE HISTORY OF IMPERIAL POLITICS AND THE POLITICS OF IMPERIAL HISTORY

GERARD J. LIBARIDIAN 

Abstract

This article constitutes a discourse of the essence of the empire, and on ensuing contradictions in what otherwise had been a commonly experienced history by Turks and Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. This article is a moment of reflection on the author's paradigm of empire, based on his academic research and diplomatic experience. The article addresses three questions: 1) What are empires and what are not, 2) Contradictions in the common history of Muslims/Turks and Armenians and possible explanations for these contradictions, 3) The fate of empires in international politics today.

The author's empire paradigm to these three questions is motivated by two main considerations: (1) How can we explain the fundamental differences between the opposing histories of empires and peoples subject to empires? (2) On an intellectual and scientific level, how can we contribute to efforts that can move us closer to a more thorough history from which we could draw some lessons?

Historical discourse shows that differences will always remain, but even these differences should be aimed at enriching our knowledge and perspectives, and not at ignoring, obscuring or otherwise ignoring aspects of history itself. Contemporary interest in such comparative research goes beyond the methodologies that support the social sciences and the integrity of the profession of historian or other scholars of history.

Keywords: Imperial politics, Imperial history, Ottoman Empire, Young Turk, Genocide, South Caucasus, Turkey, Armenia, nation-state, imperial paradigm.

Introduction

On the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide, as commemorative programs and events were being planned around the world, the Turkish government spent a great

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This article is the slightly edited version of the keynote address the author presented in June 2014 at a conference on the Ottoman Empire at the University of Cambridge, England.

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deal of resources and energy to counter that campaign, including funding academic conferences that would help promote the Turkish position. Against the use of the term 'genocide', supporters of that government used the presumption that the Ottoman Empire was a highly tolerant and benevolent state. The Turkish state encouraged scholars of Turkish descent and others to hold such conferences in Europe and the United States.

Probably in order to maintain the appearance of academic standing and a 'balanced' approach, Armenian scientists were often invited to participate in such conferences. There were many in Armenian academic circles who opposed the participation of Armenian scholars in a conference organized by the Turks, arguing that such participation would legitimize the Turkish position of denial of the Genocide. This author, like few others, decided to participate in such conferences, arguing that the participation of Armenians with their own reports was the best way to introduce the fact of the Genocide and the real policy of the Young Turks to circles otherwise unfamiliar with these issues, especially to young Turkish scholars. Armenian scholars belonging to the second group were subjected to severe pressure by and even received threats from some of their compatriots.

There were some, especially young Armenian scholars, who, under such pressure, withdrew their positive response to participate for fear that it might threaten their future as a scholar or a member of their community.

This author was also invited to such a conference and agreed to attend, despite the horrible pressure by some colleagues. This author gave the following reasons for accepting the invitation: (a) He had something important to say about the characteristics of empires in general, and the Ottoman Empire in particular, and this statement would create a historical framework for moving away from conflicting understandings of history; (b) It was important to spread the word especially to the supporters of the Turkish state, and not to relate only to those who have already moved away from the ideology of the Turkish state, and (c) The conference would provide him with an attentive audience of well-trained groups of young Turkish historians.

The following is the text, with minor editorial changes, of the presentation delivered by this author on June 2014 at such a conference at the University of Cambridge, England, as the keynote address. The meeting was attended by some 60 scholars, mostly young Turks, as well as prominent European and American denialist academics.

This article presents my views on a most difficult and complex subject, one that has been in my thoughts not only as a scholar, but also as a diplomat. As an advisor to the president of Armenia, I dealt intensely with Russia, Turkey and Iran. I came to know their accomplished policymakers and diplomats, as well as their policies. This article is not intended to present new research. Rather, it represents a moment of reflection based on previous scholarly research and actual experience.

This article builds on research and reasoning that analyzes comparatively the political science and diplomatic issues of past and contemporary historical discourses (Libaridian 1999; Libaridian 2004; Libaridian 2005; Libaridian 2011, 82-112; Libaridian 2013, 43-64; Libaridian 2015; Davutoğlu 2014, 21-30; Wallimann, Dobkowski and Rubenstein 1987).

My years in government spanned the last year of the Soviet Union and the first six, possibly most difficult years of independence in post-Soviet states. One could notice,

even at that time, and can certainly do so since then, a resurgence of nostalgia for empire in all three of the major neighbors of the South Caucasus: Russia, Turkey, and Iran - albeit in different ways and to different degrees. All three are former empires whose policies had a major impact on the future of peoples and states, and still do. More on that later.

What empires are, and what they are not

Let us begin with an understanding of empire, since the theme of this conference is the clash between empires during the First World War. What they are, and what they are not. What is to follow may seem banal and self-evident. Yet given controversies regarding the First World War and its aftermath, and given some of the historiography on that period, it appears that we need to remind ourselves of such simple truths.

Empires have occurred in history often enough that we know they are not rare occurrences. Empires are established through conquest and violence, not only against weaker peoples but also against other empires (Behm 2018; Howe 2009; Working 2020). Empires do not have natural borders or borders that are sacrosanct. They are not divinely ordained, however much their rulers claim otherwise. In other words, empires, created by force, do not have a natural right to exist.

Though no nation, tribe, clan, race, ethnic or religious group has a natural right to rule over others, empires took themselves for granted as if they were the norm, sometimes divinely ordained, or legitimized by self-declared religious or civilizational missions. That is the premise and logic of the emperor—in our cases the tsar or tsarina, the sultan or the shah—or of the guardians of a given empire. When historians of empires join in this logic and take for granted the naturalness of empires or of their borders, when they assign any sanctity or legitimacy to the shifting borders of empires at any given time, they are conferring to some a right to rule over others. They end up writing history abstracted from the lives of real people, just as court chroniclers of empires and kingdoms did.

One would have difficulty finding a single principle that can account for all the changes to borders of empires. The historian who ascribes any historical legitimacy to the borders of an empire at any fixed time runs the risk of finding himself or herself at a loss when looking for the same legitimacy of borders that had been changed a decade earlier, or was to be changed a decade later. Such shifts could have even been voluntary: just think of the exchange the Ottoman Sultan approved in 1878 with Great Britain, turning over Cyprus to Great Britain in return for the latter's support for revising the Treaty of San Stefano.

This is not to say I do not understand why empires are created, always at someone else's expense, nor why they defend their borders, especially when they cannot expand it. That defense may involve appeal for the help of other states or empires, appeals for which Armenians were and are still condemned, appeals which are sometimes used to justify the Ottoman state's treatment of Armenians. One can easily remember such appeals, for instance those of Sultan Mahmud II, first to France and Great Britain, and then to Russia against Ibrahim Pasha's forces in Egypt. I am arguing only that the

historian must create a distance between himself or herself and the institutions and subjects they study, a methodology that underlies the social sciences. Otherwise, the historian will assign values to parties to conflicts that were devised by the holders of imperial power, take those values for granted, and thus legitimize the logic of empire.

It is not clear to me what is the natural or ideal order of things, what political configuration provides the most viable and fair basis for legitimation of states. Surely, empire is certainly not one of the choices. Yet history gives us many examples of empires built on a variety of principles of legitimation, and of historians who have bought into that justification. All of which is not to say that serious attempts are not being made to find new ways to build new empires. Even the simplest principles of international law, such as the right to self-determination, can be used to break up empires. This was the case with the Soviet Empire, or looking at Russia alone, with the start of new ones, as in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Crimea.

I am not advocating the nation-state as the ideal system of world community. As in all systems created by humans, the nation-state has more than its share of problems. First, it is difficult to define which “nation” is to make the “state.” Second, what is one to do with the “others?” Third, which elites define the character of that state? So much has been inflicted on peoples, and on ethnic and religious groups, to create the nation-state and in its name. It seems unnecessary to bring examples of states that imposed demographic homogeneity, usually with violence, to make populations conform to some vision of the ideal nation-state. Nonetheless, the nation-state is today the ostensible basis of the system of international security developed in the last century or more. Secondly, it is the framework within which peoples still subjected to foreign domination employ to achieve their secure place in that same international community.

It is possible to argue that I am committing a deadly sin, especially for a historian, when arguing in support of principles and expectations that were not at play at the time empires were committing their sins against the peoples and groups they dominated. I will plead guilty to that charge. However, there is no evidence that peoples subject to imperial and foreign rule accepted their subjected status for long, even if they did not have or develop strategies to do anything about their subjugation. We know what happened when they did employ any kind of strategy. More importantly, my assertion here serves the purpose of making an important and contrarian point. Many historians are steeped in that crime when they assess the role of empires and policies of imperial governments by projecting into such policies the norms and standards of the nation-state, norms and standards which are bad enough. I am referring specifically to their assessment of historical processes based on their assumption that the borders of any empire at any given time—and “concepts of security” based on such borders—have the same legitimacy as what we assign to nation-states today.

One of the problems in current historiography and discussion of empire, especially in the context of the Ottoman case that impacted so much of subsequent Near Eastern history, is that which is not stated, that which is taken for granted by some scholars and which as a result, provide for a very confused set of rules for the discussion. One such unstated assumption is that it was natural for the Ottoman Empire to become the Turkish Republic of today, that it indeed was manifest destiny. And that anything that was done

to reach those goals was not only a rational act that could be explained, but also a legitimate act that must be assessed by its usefulness to bring that goal closer to reality.

Although there exist organic, legal, geographic and other connections between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey, the Ottoman Empire was not a nation-state. Standards of achievement or failure relevant to the creation of the Turkish Republic, good or evil, cannot be projected back and applied to the behavior of the Ottoman Empire in a manner that explains away, justifies, or takes as a good thing anything that made it possible for the Ottoman Empire to be transformed into the Turkish Republic. History is not just the story of dominant states and dominant peoples, derived from what survives of imperial records. We have to account for the cost of this transformation to subjected peoples and groups. If the historian looks at threats to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman or any other empire as if they were late twentieth century nation-states with expectations that their territorial integrity be respected, then historians should also expect those empires to have respected all conventions and treaties that we now have that protect citizens and groups within those empires in the name of these citizens' human, political and other rights. We cannot get away with picking and choosing our principles and applying them selectively—or at least we should not be able to. The First World War and its aftermath cannot be reduced to the heroic struggle of what were to become “Turks” against foreign occupiers. For the Ottoman Empire, it was also the conscious and planned war against many of the peoples it ruled over that made that republic a Turkish republic.

Two more considerations in this first section.

First, my reference to the use of the term court chroniclers does not apply, obviously, to all historians. There are many who have defied that paradigm and included a critique of empire in their analyses. However, the majority still abide by the rules of the court as certainly do official histories and histories taught in schools to future citizens of these states.

Second, the choice between being a critical historian and a court historian, conscious or otherwise, is often made through the use of terminology that predetermines the conclusion and tends to obviate any serious discussion of the issue. The use of terms applied to those who oppose empire as “nationalists,” “secessionists,” “rebels,” “extremists,” “*komitacis*” and “terrorists” signals not only the recognition by the historian of a central authority, which is fair enough, but also confers on that authority a legitimacy which that authority claimed but which cannot be assumed by the historian. These terms allow historians to get away with ignoring or demeaning of the historical record left behind by the subjects and victims. This comes in different forms, including personal testimonies, memoirs, archives, and historical writings. What do we call those who use every available means to suppress the revolts of the subjugated? The good guys?

It is similar with the term “minority.” In whichever way one group was transformed into a numerical majority or minority on a piece of land, a people living on their historic homeland, yet turned into a minority (numerically speaking) will not conceive of themselves as a minority. The sense of belonging to a land is a very personal and communal experience and cannot be reduced to statistical considerations. In regards to Palestinians, Kurds, and Armenians, or for that matter, Native Americans, analyzing

authority as opposed to subjects' relations with language, based on the concept of "minority," brings about a distortion of history of monumental proportions.

Maybe it is necessary to use and treat peoples in such terms to maintain, in the case of the Ottoman Empire, to maintain the myth of the immaculate conception of the Republic of Turkey. That makes perfect sense as state ideology but it has little to do with the craft of history. When such concerns are incorporated into, or taken for granted in the historical analysis, we end up with bad history.

To reduce a people living on its own historic homeland into a numerical minority requires, to say the least, the application of deleterious policies over a period of time. To conceptually do so in our writing of history requires a few words that deny such peoples their peoplehood, and their right to history. It is also denial of the essences of empire, domination and exploitation, while claiming to study it and taking its legitimacy for granted. These approaches become commonplace and almost normal because the future of these peoples has already been taken away from them.

The text that accompanied the invitation to this conference refers to the impact of "nationalist rebellions" on the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and their possible collusion with foreign powers. But it does not refer to the Young Turk and earlier Ottoman rulers who perfected policies that reduced peoples to minorities. The *İttihad ve Terakki* must have known certain things about nationalist rebellions that the Canadians do not know when dealing with the Quebecois, or the British when dealing with the Irish or Scots. Such terms and assumptions take for granted the writing of history as if history is an art form that serves to legitimize the security argument advanced by imperial rulers. And in so doing, it perpetuates the securitization of the state as an absolute value, independent of the well-being and fate of its subjects or citizens.

Issues and controversies: the triangle

Once the imperial mindset becomes dominant in historiography and in the teaching of history, we are bound to part our ways in history writing, so to speak. Considering what the subjects of an empire (individuals, groups, or peoples) will remember and how they will write their history, especially when in calamitous and fateful situations, these groups and people will be overwhelmed by their own victimization. It may be that the best way to illustrate what I mean is to discuss an issue which is still hovering over us. That which is now crassly and misleadingly called the "Turkish/Armenian issue," a term that hides more than it reveals.

This is a multi-layered set of issues, in fact, where individual and collective memories, fundamental differences in the writing and teaching of history, and the political import of that history interrelate and affect each other (Burton 1994; Satia 2022; Price 2006, 602-627). At the bottom of the set of issues inferred by that expression you would probably find the individual Armenian meeting an individual Turk for the first time and asking a question such as "why did you kill us?" Somewhere at the top is the problem of relations between the Turkish Republic and the Republic of Armenia, that is, relations between two internationally recognized states. In between are two sets of issues. First, those issues raised by scholarship on the factuality of the 1915 Genocide of the

Armenians by the Young Turk Ottoman government. Second, the issues raised by the campaign for the international recognition of that Genocide, waged especially by Diasporan organizations. As most readers would be aware, since the 1970s, Diasporan organizations have focused on that issue as their most important external agenda item. It is an issue that in a way also colors intra community agendas.

But since it all begins with what happened in history, let us look for a moment at that history. I do believe that to understand this period and the subsequent controversies it engendered, and to move beyond the inadequate paradigm of a “Turkish/Armenian” issue, we need to account for the role of the Great Powers, or the Western empires, in the events of this period. Indeed, we would be unable to understand history adequately and overcome the gap between two different and opposing narratives if we left the European imperial dimension out of the equation and reduced the issues to a “Turkish,” versus an “Armenian” confrontation, as simple, almost comforting for many, as it may sound. But adding a third party to the conflict is not sufficient. We also need to delineate the conflicting role each of the three parties played in that era.

The module I have developed to present a very complex situation in relatively simple, though I do not believe simplistic terms, is a triangle, as opposed to a straight line with two opposing ends. Each dimension or angle represents one party to the conflict: The Ottoman state, the Great Powers and the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. The key here is to understand that each angle, or each party to the conflict, plays two different and contradictory roles with regard to the other two angles or parties, without implying an equality in the power and resources of each. Here is what I mean.

The first angle or dimension is commonly known as the “Turkish” side,” that being in fact the Ottoman state and those who governed in its name, which is different from the “Turk.” On one hand, the Ottoman state persistently was a victim of Great Power aggression throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. (This was, of course, after the Ottoman empire itself had encroached on the lands of many European powers.) On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire itself was an empire. Ostensibly in the name of a religion, a dynasty was ruling not only over a large number of its own coreligionists of various ethnic backgrounds, but also over a variety of peoples who did not belong to its religion, tribe or clan. That rule was discriminatory by definition, made on the basis of religion, notwithstanding its qualified toleration of—though not equality with—non-Muslims.

As time went on, that empire also lost its sense of fairness or efficiency. It became brutal beyond the call of duty and of the parameters set by Islam. The empire and its regime therefore became unacceptable to a number of groups, including many Muslim groups, and even to those that had started identifying themselves as Turks, not just as Muslims. The paths toward a freer society were many, the interaction and dynamics between these various ethnic and religious groups complex. This is not the place to describe these processes. But clearly the Ottoman state emerges as both victim and victimizer. It was the victim of great power imperialism, and too the victimizer of a large number of peoples and groups that itself ruled over.

Now for the Great Powers. I have already alluded to their role as empires that tried to expand their influence and control at the expense of others, including that of the Ottoman Empire. Clearly, they were in the role of victimizers. There is no need here to

expound on that dimension. Yet the most liberal, enlightening, and liberationist ideas of equality and freedom were produced in those countries. These ideas were liberating, giving form and language to, and legitimizing yearnings for freedom and equality, first to their own peoples, and then to peoples and groups elsewhere. This included those under Ottoman rule. Thus, in addition to their nefarious role as brazen conquerors, the states of the Great Powers also appear in history as the places where science, progress and political liberalism prevailed. In opposition, they characterized the empires and peoples they victimized as examples of backwardness, traditionalism, unscientific if not irrational modes of thinking. Whatever the reason why these Great Powers introduced such liberal and liberating discourse in their domestic and foreign policies, peoples in otherwise oppressed environments took their words and slogans seriously. This duality of the role of Western imperial powers, as victimizer of the Ottoman Empire and as the hope for liberation of the latter's victims, is also expressed in the different ways in which the West interacted with Armenians. Some Great Power actors were genuinely concerned with the fate of Armenians and others in the Ottoman Empire. Others merely used it to extract territories and other benefits from the Ottoman Empire. It is difficult to delineate where one begins and the other ends.

Finally, there is the dual role of Armenians, a people who had lived and developed a civilization for millennia in their own homeland, most of that homeland being under Ottoman rule for last few centuries. It is generally recognized that Armenians in the Ottoman Empire were at best second-class subjects. In fact, the much-heralded economic well-being of a segment of the Armenian population, especially in cities, has been used to ignore the utter depravity and abject poverty of most Armenians who lived in the rural areas of the provinces in historic Western Armenia (the Eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire). Here I am referring to the underlying and fundamental agrarian issue and devastating local conditions that eventually gave rise to the Armenian revolutionary parties.

Yet in their meanderings for a savior—from reforms in the Armenian millet system to the larger *Tanzimat* era reforms in the empire, neither of which provided relief—Armenians ended up with high expectations from the Great Powers, the source of the principles of egalitarianism and modern national identity. Having given up on the possibility of internal reform, in 1878, the Armenian Patriarchate of Istanbul appealed first to the Russians, and then to the European powers for help. These were the same Great Powers that were trying to dismember the Ottoman Empire, except that they could not agree on how to do it, as opposed, let us say, to the 1884 partition of Africa. It is also paradoxical that by associating with the West, a Christian West, educated, urban, and active Armenians developed a sense of civilizational superiority over Muslims, whom they associated with backwardness. It is possible that this was a countermeasure to the sense of superiority that even the humblest Muslim could have toward any Christian, a sense that was an integral element to the Ottoman system.

Here is what happened then, and what has been perpetuated in historiography, for the most part. The Ottoman state and those in power, increasingly identifying themselves as Turks, focused exclusively on the victimizing dimension of the Great Powers. That eventually became the basis of what is known as the “Great War of Liberation,” the founding legend of the Turkish Republic. In this context it was convenient, maybe even

necessary, to demean the egalitarian and liberal political notions emanating from the West, to forget the nature of the Ottoman state as an empire itself with its own victims, and to confound Armenian grievances with Great Power imperialism. Legitimate grievances were ignored ostensibly because such grievances were used by the Great Powers to dismember the Ottoman Empire. Undoubtedly many of the Young Turk groups within the Ottoman power structure made use of Western ideas. In the end, however, it was the “big fish eat small fish” rationalism of social Darwinism that prevailed and determined the outcome of history, and not the part that includes liberty, fraternity, and, generally speaking, equality. The Ottoman/Turkish part of the triangle looked at Armenians and other non-Muslims as allies of the victimizing Great Powers, but would not see the position of Armenians as an oppressed, even massacred people who may not have had any choice but to appeal to the Great Powers for help. The Ottoman leaders never shied away from working closely with one or another of the Great Powers, from using one against the other when it was useful to them. What they resented is when their subjects tried to get into the equation. The reason for that is that those in power in the Ottoman Empire were trying to resolve a different problem than their victims. More on that later.

By and large, the Great Powers saw the Ottoman Empire as a major morsel, and Armenians and others as excuses to morally ground their interventions. No doubt many segments of Western societies sympathized genuinely with the plight of Armenians as victims. More importantly, it was also not always easy to see a clear line of demarcation between where humanitarian concerns ended and realpolitik inspired by imperial rivalries began. But it was ultimately the imperial framework within which Armenians—the dominant Christian people in the Eastern provinces (or historic Western Armenia)—were placed. This framework determined the policies of the Great Powers.

For their part, Armenians defined their position as victims of Ottoman policies, and posed their association with Great Powers and the West as a strategy for survival, if not liberation. Under the circumstances, they were not positioned to extract reforms that would have obviated the need for appeals to the Great Powers, and accounted for the victimization of the Ottoman Empire by their ostensible allies, the same Great Powers, especially the Russians, the French, and the British. This is not to say that there were no Armenians who understood the dual role of the Ottoman Empire, or at the least were aware of the Ottoman/Turkish state perception of the Great Powers as victimizers.

On the contrary. The tragedy was that fear of imminent destruction of the economic base of the Armenian homeland, the intermittent massacres of Armenians, the unwillingness and/or inability of reformist Ottomans to address the agrarian issue (including Young Turks), and lawlessness in these provinces had created an existential threat which called for some form of immediate intervention. But as have seen, for the ruling elites in that state, any such intervention was seen strictly as a form of further victimization of the Ottoman state. Thus, each party played a complex role in the making of history and of its outcome but each reduced the other into a single role at the time (Drayton 2011; Pitts 2012). And we know what the result of that multiple reductionisms was.

What is almost as dramatic is that by and large, historians and other social scientists studying this period have followed the same pattern that political leaders did when

making that history. I am not referring here to the controversy surrounding the use of the term genocide. That problem is limited to the question of characterizing what the deportations and massacres of Ottoman Armenians during the First World War amounted to. I am referring to the historical context within which 1915 took place, regardless of what one calls it. As readers are probably aware, 1915 is one of the euphemisms used to avoid the term genocide, the term which best describes the character of Ottoman policy.

Most Turkish scholars and many others have written their works fully aware of the role of the victimized Ottoman/Turkish state, but neglected its oppressive and brutal nature. At the same time, they have highlighted the role of Armenians as an excuse for the Great Powers to pursue their schemes, while ignoring the plight of the Armenians that compelled them to appeal to the Great Powers to begin with (Libaridian 2005, 2011). Official Turkish historiography has created this model. But even those who have looked at the Armenian situation have focused largely on the aspect of victimization. Yet the larger context of the socioeconomic crisis among the Armenian rural population, which amounted to an existential threat, has been ignored.

Armenian and many other scholars have stressed that same existential threat I described earlier. Yet the threat has been usually framed in ethnic, nationalist and administrative terms, rather than the socio-economic crisis that dominated Armenian discourse prior to the First World War. And most Armenian scholars have ignored the victimizing policies of the Great Powers, the same policies that were perceived by Ottoman elites and rulers as the main threat to the state they controlled, the Ottoman Empire. Thus, a good portion of the divergence in histories can be traced back to the politics of empire(s), to the one-dimensional view of the role of these different parties relative to the others.

It is possible to further crystalize the conflicting renderings of history by recognizing the fact that Ottoman leaders and later the *İttihad ve Terakki* and other Young Turks, were trying to resolve a different problem than what Armenian leaders had in mind. The challenge to Ottoman and *İttihad* leaders was this: How to preserve the state and maintain their domination of it, as an empire, if possible, whatever the cost to its subject peoples. The challenge for Armenian organizations speaking on behalf of the Armenian people was, how to preserve its people and their land-based communities in their historic homeland, with a minimal degree of security and well-being.

For each, it appears, it was essential that they see the other in a single dimensional framework. Still, the Ottoman state and its government at the time, with its obsession with state survival, was responsible not only for genocide, but also for the many Muslim deaths in Anatolia that resulted from that government's decision to enter the war. Few deaths of Muslims in Anatolia or anywhere else can be placed at the feet of Armenians at any time. Such losses of life are the result of an imperial decision by a government acting in the name of an empire that was soon to become a "nation-state," in the name of Muslims, in the name of Turks, and whatever else the group that had usurped power could muster to pursue its diplomatic games and war objectives.

In the end, we need to look at a missing dimension of the conflict between the Ottoman leaders and the Armenians. Ottoman leaders were actually quite well aware of and dreaded the liberal/reformist solutions Armenian leaders proposed for the Ottoman

state. These included parliamentarianism, equitable representation in government for all, and administrative, agrarian and social reforms. Thus, for the *İttihad*, there was not only an ethnic/religious dimension to their Armenian problem, but also a political one. Armenian approaches, i.e., demands for domestic reforms, also constituted a threat to the statist, conservative, military-based, and Turkish nationalist state they imagined and they wanted to leave behind. That is, political organizations representing Armenians were seen as a progressive social and political force that challenged the *İttihad*/Turkish vision of the future of the empire. Armenian political parties constituted the left wing of whatever was left of the Ottoman political spectrum. Armenians comprised the last constituency of parliamentarianism in the Ottoman Empire. Paradoxically, Armenian political parties opted for empire, seeing the dangers of a Turkish nation-state, yet they strove for a reformed empire. And that may have been seen as great a threat to the emerging Turkish state, as imagined by the *İttihad*, as any other dimension represented by Armenians. Armenians were organized at the grass roots level. Until 1908, they were led by political parties that were socialistic and revolutionary until 1908. And they then found salvation in liberalism and representative government after the Young Turk Revolution, which promised to restore the 1878 Constitution.

Imagine how different the history of the late Ottoman Empire would have been written by Turkish and Western historians if the demands made by Armenian organizations—equality, agrarian reforms to improve the lot of the peasantry, administrative and judicial reforms, government by representation and through the rule of law, elimination of usury and illegal and extra-legal taxation—were made by some Muslim/Turkish group(s). It is not good history when the historian dismisses such realities just because the historian, just as the Ottoman government, had determined that the welfare of peasants and others were not their concern when the latter were Armenians. The historian becomes a court chronicler when he or she takes for granted the form and regime of the state she or he is supposed to study, and when he or she considers anything that might have improved the lives of Ottoman subjects, while diminishing the power and privileges of the ruling ethnic element and class as a threat to the state, just as the state did in its time.

This is a significant, if not crucial, dimension that argues for the integration of the “Armenian” issue into the history of the Ottoman/Turkish history, rather than extraneous and inimical to it. Imagining the “Armenian” as an alien element to the history and politics of the Ottoman Empire—one that had to be, and was excised at the end—represents an alienation that makes possible the simplified, nationalist narratives on both sides. These narratives seem irreconcilable. How could we resolve the monumental differences between narratives when historians ignore the attempt of Armenian political parties to integrate the resolution of the so called “Armenian Question” within the Ottoman political spectrum, and within the context of the reinstatement of the 1878 Ottoman Constitution? Here two questions can be raised: Who abandoned the Ottoman constitution? And who, in the end was the greatest threat to the Ottoman Empire?

There is need for a process toward the integration of these narratives, at least the critical elements of the narratives that have not only diverged but also contradicted each other (Kennedy 2015, 5-22; Kramer 2011). To begin with, the framework for such an integrated history could be the development of a narrative that has the necessary

intellectual distance from those dictated by the perceptions of the actors at the time; instead, a narrative which is based on the complexity of history, beginning with the duality of the position of each player. Most importantly, historians and other scholars on one side should not ignore the socioeconomic conditions and existential crisis that engendered Armenian nationalism. Historians and other scholars on the other side should not ignore the nefarious role played by the Great Powers in contributing to the crises of the Ottoman state, and the criminal responses such a role elicited from its Turkish leaders.

As indicated earlier, it is not the intention of this author to discuss the question of different characterizations of Ottoman policies regarding Armenians during the First World War. While we need to recognize the distinction between what happened and what its characterization means today, I just want to add one point to end this second segment of the discussion: From the historian's point of view, the campaigns for the recognition of the Genocide committed by the *İttihad* government beginning in 1915, and the campaign of denial of that Genocide, both constitute sub-text beneath the conflict inherent in the two opposing renderings of history.

The fate of empires in international politics today

The above is not mere academic discussion. As indicated earlier, we are witnessing a nostalgic return to the idea of empire, albeit in new as well as old forms. Most recent events have proven that the governments of three former empires that in the last three centuries constituted the most relevant powers in the region—Turkey, Russia and Iran—are manifesting behavior that transcends the nostalgic sentiment. In some cases, they have graduated from the sphere of sentimental attachment to actual policies of re-creation of empires, in some form or another. Particularly in Russia and Turkey, we now have governments that consider their imperial heritage positive capital that justifies renewed attempts at domination over their neighbors. This nostalgia is not so much due to the greatness of these empires. Rather, it is the failure of political imagination on the part of major players on the world stage—the US, Russia, Europe and China—who did not know how to benefit from the window of opportunity for the new world order created by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

For a variety of reasons, empires lose their vitality and ability to maintain the status quo. Others with more advanced technology and resources haunt and replace them. What follows after the collapse of an empire is as important as what happened during the imperial period. Peoples, nations, and states that emerge from such collapses may or may not develop a serious critique of empire.

But the inheritor or dominant state is often far more reluctant to be critical of the imperial tradition. After all, it is empire that secured the beautiful and sumptuous palaces, cathedrals, and mosques that adorn their capitals and other cities, the ones they now take for granted, and which tourists flock to visit. It is empire that gave them a sense of grandeur, superiority, exceptionalism, special missions, or manifest destiny. To question the “naturalness” of all that may be unpatriotic, to assert that much of that wealth was the product of the exploitation of other peoples and lands and sometimes of their own

people, is to take the fun out of history, at least for those historians who live vicariously the glory that was through the writing of history. While critique of empire as such has happened in societies with long traditions of democracy within the metropolis, critical assessments are rare in those who hold onto a single legitimizing narrative of their nation. Empires create subjects in their time and panegyrists. They also seem to bedazzle historians who, in essence, then become court chroniclers.

Thus, it is not commonplace to find Iranian historians and social scientists with critical views of the grandeur of Persian empires, Russian scholars who question the Romanov and Soviet empires, and Turkish colleagues who have looked seriously at some of the repressive and oppressive, certainly imperialist dimensions of Ottoman rule. Imperial mindsets survive empires in a variety of forms, as do imperial rivalries in collective memory. They survive in historiography and in policymaking, often long after empires are gone. In fact, historians become the memory makers who sustain empire, as suggested by a colleague.

Now back to the supposed end of empire. When the USSR collapsed in 1991, it seemed to some that there now was a power vacuum in some parts of the world. Let's take the South Caucasus, a region I know better than I know others. So, we reach the end of 1991 and there is no longer a USSR. During these years, a former superpower has been reduced to less than a third-rate power, except for its nuclear arsenal. What did neighboring former empires Iran and Turkey do? They sensed a vacuum and reverted immediately back to their imperial past. They thought of the South Caucasus region as a prize to be re-won, a region where they could reassert their influence, even if as a shadow of their former selves. This was the beginning of the nostalgia for empire, which went nowhere because the absence of Russia in the region was a temporary setback, if not an illusion.

Had there been a serious critique of the imperial past of these states from within, there may have been an alternative model of behavior. Iranian policymakers and scholars looked upon Persian rule over the South Caucasus until 1828 as a period of benevolent government, in which Armenians and Muslims did not fight (as they were now doing in Karabakh), and where a fatherly and benevolent metropolis had managed differences wisely. Turkish scholars argued that the Ottoman millet system had been most benevolent in its toleration of the existence of non-Muslims as a favor, and that the Ottoman period was a good one, even if at the end even some of their subject peoples were denied their existence. And they implied, as did policy makers, that the extension of Turkish influence on the new republics could be the basis for peace, security, and stability in the South Caucasus. Just as the Iranians had argued. Except that the Iranians had argued in favor of the restoration of an Iranian influence based on an economic common space, and they were quick to realize they were overreaching. Turkey, more attuned to NATO terminology, promoted the idea of a common "security" space. But the imperial past was not an illusion for Russia and Turkey, the other two so-called nation-states. It was a model that was suggesting certain neo-imperial policies.

We know that none of that came to pass, although Iran kept a consistent presence in all three republics, and Turkey made headways in Georgia and Azerbaijan. But in the end, none of that translated into a new Iranian or Turkish sphere of influence over the whole region (Libaridian 2013, 2015). The latter may have happened if Turkey had resolved its problems with Armenia for the sake of greater stakes in the region.

Fast forward to a decade or more. Russia has come back with a vengeance. Not that it was absent during this period. It is just that Russia was biding its time, trying to find the right leader, the right moment, and the right justification. So now we have a slightly different situation in two ways. The vague notion of influence is replaced in Russia and Turkey with a genuine sense of nostalgia for the lost empires. In Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan we have leaders whose visions roughly correspond to lost empires, Russian/Soviet and Ottoman, respectively. And make no mistake about it, these are visions fed by nostalgia, but not limited to it. History—which includes the mess these empires left behind them—is being used to promote policies that are inspired by visions of empire redux in the name of whatever can be used. This includes protection of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers, if not inherited natural rights over peoples and territories. And Turkey is flaunting its past Ottoman benevolent rule as a reason to attempt to determine a larger place for itself under the sun.

Conclusion and discussion

To end this article, I need to raise two questions: What is the responsibility of historians and social scientists in the resurgence of imperial solutions to current problems? Could things have been different in Russia and Turkey had historians and other social scientists been more critical assessors of imperial history, especially when educating the new generations in schools?

To summarize: First, we do not do well as historians when we take for granted the values of the people and institutions we are supposed to study. Second, to the extent that conflicts in the presentation of history are engendered by actual differences in the understanding of history and not by politics, we should find ways to bridge those conflicting narratives by (a) better understanding our own prejudices and biases; (b) strengthening our tools that expand the areas where we apply intellectual integrity; (c) filling in the lacunae in our knowledge and not judging other scholars by their ethnicity; and (d) not expecting that we ‘split the difference’ in order to reach what might be called a “historians’ historical compromise on history,” as opposed to a genuine integration of disparate histories. And third, what we say about the past may have an impact on the future. Successor states to empires that hold nostalgic feelings and impulses for empire may be relying on us to legitimize the imperial past and justify current policies. What we say and what we write matters not just for the past, but also for the future.

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THE US, STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND ARMENIA: A SIGHT ON THE FUTURE

RUBEN ELAMIRYAN *

Abstract

The political, economic and geopolitical presence of the United States in the South Caucasus dates back at least a century, when, after the First World War, they emerged as a global political, economic and geopolitical actor. Cooperation has increased dramatically since 1991, when the three countries gained independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union. From this perspective, the article focuses on identifying core US interests in Eurasia and attempting to define US strategic interests and priorities with respect to the region. In this sense, the main research question is how the US relations with the South Caucasus and in particular with Armenia will look like in the future, especially within the current stage of the Ukrainian conflict that began after February 2022.

The article simulates and tests four scenarios for future US engagement with the South Caucasus. Based on these scenarios, it is argued that, despite the lack of strategic interests in the region, the Ukrainian conflict prompted the US to increase its presence in the South Caucasus. This study is based on strategic documents, including the US National Security Strategy (2017), the Interim National Security Strategic Guidance of 2021, other white papers, reports, and studies of US foreign policy priorities.

Keywords: US, South Caucasus, Armenia, foreign policy, cooperation, future, scenario.

Introduction

The ongoing transformation of the world order, global turbulence, and uncertainty comprehensively impacted the role and strategic presence of the US in different parts of the world. In the context of the geopolitical importance of the region for the US, studying the evolution of US policy towards the countries of the South Caucasus, the region as a whole, studying changes in US behavior and tools for implementing this policy are necessary to protect the United States of its own national interests.

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Back in 2011 the then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton published an article entitled “America’s Pacific Century”. In the article, Clinton, particularly, wrote that “the Asia-Pacific has become a key driver of global politics”, hence, the US strategic focus in the future should be redirected, first of all, towards that destination (Clinton 2011).

Interestingly, a United States naval officer, strategist, and historian Alfred Mahan anticipated Clinton’s approach approximately one and half century ago. In his famously known “The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783” Mahan wrote that the US naval power (as a consequence geopolitical domination) will be determined by its strategic presence in the Asia-Pacific (Russell 2006).

In fact, Clinton’s article was a conceptual one and determined the foreign policy priorities for the US not only during the Obama administration, but also far beyond, being implemented with some structural changes by both Trump and Biden administrations, especially, given that in 2011 Biden held the position of the Vice-President.

The article received a non-official name “Pivot to Asia” and demonstrated the shift of the US strategic interests from the Middle East and in some sense Europe towards that region (Beitelman 2012).

These transformations raise questions about the future of the world order and bring uncertainty to various parts of the world regarding the future of the US strategic presence (Strategic Studies Institute 2020).

The South Caucasus, and particularly, Armenia, is not an exception. Being “sandwiched” in the middle of Eurasia, the strategic shift in the US foreign policy and security agenda will lead and has already led to major changes in the US relations with the countries of the region. From this perspective, this paper is an attempt to address those changes and develop potential scenarios for the future.

Methodology and scope of the research

The research of the US interests towards the South Caucasus has been in focus of international and local scholars. Over years, such scholars as Martha Brill Olcott, Inessa Baban, Zaur Shiriyevev, James Nixey, George Khelashvili, S. Neil Macfarlane, Mikayel Zolyan, Paul Stronski, Anar Valiyev, Rufat Ahmadzada, Stephen Blank, Andreas Persbo, Taras Kuzio, Beniamin Poghosyan, and many others has written extensively on the topic of this research (Börzel, Pamuk and Stahn 2009; Markedonov 2021; Olcott 2002; Asatryan 2002; Baban and Shiriyevev 2010; Blank 2012; Nixey 2010; Khelashvili and Macfarlane 2010; Stronski 2020; Persbo 2021; Poghosyan 2022; Kuzio 2022).

However, this paper makes an attempt to analyze the US strategic approaches towards the South Caucasus and model potential scenarios for the future. Hence, the main research question is what the future of US relations with the South Caucasus and particularly Armenia will look like, especially, in the framework of the current stage of the Ukrainian conflict started after February 2022. To answer this question, the article starts with the discussion of strategic foundations which drive the US foreign policy globally and in the South Caucasus. Based on the US National Security Strategy of 2017, Interim National Security Strategic Guidance of 2021, other official and semi-official

papers and publications, the article analyzes the main US objectives and priorities in the region. Based on the above it continues and makes an attempt to draw potential scenarios on the future of the US strategic approaches towards the South Caucasus. The article addresses the US strategic priorities and interests, limiting the timeframe by January 2022. It continues with the “Discussion” section, where the article is making an attempt to analyze the impact of the current stage of the Ukrainian conflict started after February 2022 on the US strategic vision towards the South Caucasus and Armenia, in particular.

South Caucasus in US strategic focus

The US presence in the South Caucasus goes back for at least a century when after the World War One it appeared as a global political, economic, and geopolitical actor. Since then, the US foreign policy towards that region has faced significant changes and demonstrated zigzags of cooperation with the countries of the South Caucasus.

The cooperation has demonstrated major transformations since 1991 when the three countries in the South Caucasus has received independence after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. However, the current stage of the US relations with the South Caucasus countries seem to face gradual decline (Youngs 2017, 177-211; Glaser (Kukartseva) and Thomann 2022).

Particularly, the US National Security Strategy (Strategy) of 2017, which is still in force, does not provide a clear vision towards the region. It only touches upon Ukraine and Georgia in the section entitled “Europe.” This allows to expand that section towards the other EaP countries, provided their geographical location and the fact that no other section in the Strategy discusses that region.

Describing the US interests in Europe the Strategy states that “the United States is safer when Europe is prosperous and stable, and can help defend our shared interests and ideals. The United States remains firmly committed to our [American] European allies and partners. The NATO alliance of free and sovereign states is one of our great advantages over our competitors, and the United States remains committed to Article V of the Washington Treaty” (The White House 2017). Additionally, the Strategy outlines political and economic priority actions, stressing the necessity to collaborate with the European allies and partners to, particularly, confront forces threatening to undermine “our common values, security interests, and shared vision”, including those coming from Russia, North Korea, Iran, and China, as well as to provide strategic stability in the European neighborhood and energy security for the EU (The White House 2017; Shraibman 2019).

The regional visit of the former US National Security Advisor John Bolton paid to the South Caucasus in October 2018, once again emphasized the significance of the region in terms of strategic stability in the NATO’s neighborhood, as well as deterrence of Russia, China, and Iran (U.S. Embassy Yerevan 2018).

When it comes to the Biden administration, in March 2021 the White House has published an Interim National Security Strategic Guidance (Guidance). In the introduction section President Biden writes that he is “issuing this interim guidance to

convey my vision for how America will engage with the world” (The White House 2021).

The Guidance directs departments and agencies until the new National Security Strategy is published. Hence, it can be referred to a preliminary official document, which set the US foreign policy priorities.

However, the Guidance does not have any reflection on the South Caucasus. It does not even refer to Georgia separately as the Strategy did (The White House 2017). It speaks about the development and strengthening of relations with the US allies and partners, particularly, in the framework of NATO (The White House 2021). It speaks also about the necessity to contain China, Russia, and Iran. A very similar approach was present in the Strategy (The White House 2017).

At the same time, the Guidance in opposite to the Strategy sets the US decisive support towards democracy and democratic development in the world (The White House 2017, 2021). Very similar approach is presented in the article written by Biden for the Foreign Affairs in March-April 2020 and entitled “Why America must lead again”, before he formally announced to run for the US Presidency.

The article contained neither any specific reflection on the South Caucasus, as a region, nor any specific country of the region (Biden 2020).

Finally, it is important to mention that on April 24, 2021 Joe Biden used the term “Genocide” in speech devoted to the massive killings of Armenians in Turkey early 20th century¹. On the one hand, this might be seen as a US claim to return to the South Caucasus. On the other hand, given the ongoing deterioration of the US - Turkey relations, Biden’s speech on Armenian Genocide might be a signal to Turkey.

Thus, we see that on strategic level the US does not have any special focus on the South Caucasus. It is interested in long-term strategic stability in the region, which is located in the NATO and EU neighborhood. At the same time, the US is interested to provide energy sovereignty for the EU, where the Caspian gas can play a vital role. However, provided the US natural gas export ambitions to the EU, this interest can decline with rise of US export capabilities. Finally, the US is interested to deter Russia (as a political and military threat), China (as economic threat), and Iran (military, political) in the region (Harold and Nader 2012).

The Future Dimension of the US-South Caucasus Relationship

The demonstration and analysis of the US strategic interests in the South Caucasus allows coming up with the following potential scenarios for the future.

Scenario 1: Delegation of strategic presence

In April 2021 the US launched indirect talks with Iran around a new “Iranian Deal” (DeYoung 2021). Given that majority of the top officials in Biden’s Administration were part of the negotiations and supported the “Nuclear Deal” in Obama Administration (Blinken, Salivan, Burns, Austin), there is a high possibility for a new deal. At the same time, in opposite to the Strategy, the Guidance stresses the importance of diplomacy to

¹ BBC. 2021. “Biden says Armenian mass killing was genocide.” Accessed June 1, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56874811>.

stop the Iranian nuclear program and its “other destructive actions” (The White House 2021).

A question can be raised, what we can expect if the Deal is signed. To answer this question, it is necessary to understand, why the Biden Administration wants a new deal. It can be suggested that the US has the following interests:

- to contain the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),
- to balance rising Turkey in the region,
- to decrease Russian influence in the Middle East,
- to decrease geopolitical tensions or achieve balance of powers in the Middle East to be able to put more efforts into the successful implementation of the “Pivot to Asia” Doctrine.

From this perspective, the “New Iranian Deal” will allow containing and decreasing Chinese influence in Iran, which, according to some experts, might be considered to be the “gate” to the Middle East for the as the BRI. This becomes more urgent given the recent Strategic Partnership Agreement for 25 years signed between China and Iran (Stanzel 2022; Figueroa 2022).

On the other hand, the Western capital might be cautious to enter the Iranian market, having the experience of 2016, when after coming to power, Trump canceled the US participation in the Deal and threatened to sanction any company, which was going to work with Iran. However, given the current developments, the Deal will lead to gradual West-Iran normalization with subsequent political, geopolitical, and economic consequences.

The US-Iran normalization will most probably lead to decrease of tensions in the Middle East with even potential Iran-Israel normalization over time. This will foster a new balance of powers in the Middle East, when, particularly, such “middle powers” as Iran, Turkey, Israel, and Saudi Arabia will contain each other and make a new “concert” in that region. Those developments will allow the US paying more attention to the Asia-Pacific, while keeping the Middle East under control through its allies and balance of powers.

Recently India started showing growing interest towards the Middle East and, particularly, Iran (Rowden 2020). Given the US interest to involve India to contain China (Zhang 2022; Pu 2022), as well as its complex relations with China and Turkey, India might have strategic role in the US Middle Eastern “balancing” agenda as a “middle power”, too. The EU might also play a role in that balance of powers as an economic, normative, and soft power.

Thus, in this scenario the US will decrease its strategic presence in the Middle East (as argued in “Pivot to Asia”) and South Caucasus, delegating its strategic presence to the “middle powers” in the region (Hillary 2011; Beitelman 2012).

Finally, in this scenario, Turkey might “play” both pro and anti-US side based on the further developments in the US-Turkey relations.

Scenario 2: Rise of US presence in the South Caucasus

In April 2021 U.S. Senate confirmed Victoria Nuland as Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Nuland was actively involved in supporting Ukraine during the

“Revolution of Dignity” in 2013-2014, while taking hard stance on Russia (Razom 2016).

According to the National Interest “reports of Victoria Nuland’s future appointment are sure to come as a source of elation to the government in Kiev. By the same token, they send perhaps the clearest message yet to Moscow that the prospects for meaningful U.S.-Russian rapprochement under a Biden administration appear exceedingly slim” (Episkopos 2021).

This allows coming up with the second scenario, according to which the US will stay in the post-Soviet space and increase pressure on Russia including through post-Soviet “periphery”, particularly, in the South Caucasus.

If implemented, the following might take place:

- Georgia will receive additional support,
- The US will substantially increase its role in the OSCE Minsk Group for the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict,
- The US will activate its work with Azerbaijan, including by brokering conflict resolution with Armenia after Azerbaijan invaded Armenia’s sovereign territory².
- The US might attempt to improve relations with Turkey to balance Russia,
- A new nuclear deal with Iran will allow the US bringing it in and use as another balancer against Russia in the South Caucasus. The region might even serve to export Iranian gas to Europe, which will mean further decrease of Russia’s role in the region.
- The US might bring in also India as both geopolitical balancer and economic power.

In case of this scenario, there might be a rising confrontation between West and Russia in the South Caucasus. Artsakh and Armenia seem to be most vulnerable to become a battlefield, but Georgia and Azerbaijan are not fully secured, too.

Scenario 3: US leaves the South Caucasus

Over more than ten years the US has been gradually losing strategic interest towards the South Caucasus. Particularly, the region is facing decline in FDIs and foreign aid from the US, trade is also suffering a lot (Elamiryan 2017; Kondratov and Johansson-Nogués 2022). In the meantime, there is decline in US interests in the Middle East and Afghanistan, for which the South Caucasus served as a bridge. Finally, the US might gradually lose its interest towards Caspian gas as it is striving to sell its own resources to Europe (Ellyatt 2019; Boute 2022).

Hence, the third scenario suggests a narrative where the US is completely leaving the South Caucasus. In this case, Russia and Turkey will dominate the region (Rumer, Sokolsky and Stronski 2017; Novikova 2014). Moreover, without the Western support Turkey would have to compromise to Russia in most important for Russia issues. However, this scenario is not very realistic, as the containment of Russia, China, and

² RFE/RL. 2021. “France’s Macron Calls For Azerbaijani Troop Pullout From ‘Armenian Territory’.” RFE/RL’s Armenian Service, June 01, 2021. Accessed November 1, 2022. <https://www.rferl.org/a/france-macron-nagorno-karabakh/31284862.html>.

Iran is an important priority for the US. As a result, it will hardly leave a region, which is right on the crossroad of those three powers.

Scenario 4: US-Russia rapprochement

The final fourth scenario might be the US-Russia rapprochement. Given the details of such a potential deal, the sides can either divide the South Caucasus or keep it open for cooperation for both sides. However, given the current geopolitical developments and the level of Russia-West relations, it is hard to imagine the implementation of this scenario in the near future.

Discussion and conclusions

The current stage of the conflict in Ukraine, started after February 24, 2022 has dramatically changed security landscape in whole Eurasia, including in the South Caucasus. Being one of the peripheries of US interests, as demonstrated above, it very soon received a special attention as, for instance, a new old energy hub to provide energy security for US allies in Europe.

In May 2022 the US Department of State has approved the Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) for Armenia. In particular, it states that Armenia's defeat in Third Artsakh war, as well as "ongoing tensions along its borders highlight the importance of the U.S. role as a Minsk Group Co-Chair and other diplomatic efforts to improve Armenia's ties with its neighbors." Moreover, the ICS says that "the U.S. role has become more important as regional tensions increase following Russia's invasion of Ukraine." (US Department of State 2022).

On the other hand, conflict in Ukraine has shifted the attention of Russia, as one of the key security actors in the region, which, as a result, created not full, but substantive power vacuum in the region. It enabled Azerbaijan to play much harder and freer with Armenia. Azerbaijan (supported by its ally Turkey) started demanding some parts of sovereign territory of the Republic of Armenia. Moreover, it went further and occupied some of them, and then in September 2022 it launched a full scale military aggression, targeting more than thirty communities on the territory of Armenia, including such cities as Jermuk, Vardenis, Goris, etc. (Holmes 2022).

The US became one of those few major powers which named Azerbaijani aggression an "aggression" and called for immediate withdrawal of Azeri troops from the territory of Armenia (Gowen and Wang. 2022). Moreover, in September 2022 Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, paid an historical visit to Armenia. She became the most top official to visit Yerevan since Armenia received independence in 1991. During the visit, Pelosi restated US support to Armenia, its democratic way of development, as well told, that the delegation expected to hear what kind of support Armenian government expected from the US (U.S. Embassy in Armenia 2022).

Summarizing the recent developments and four scenarios presented above, it can be concluded that given the Ukrainian conflict and level of relations between the US (and West, in general) and Russia, the "great game" in the South Caucasus and for the region will continue with high intensity.

In the given reality, the *second scenario* is the most realistic, when the US will increase its presence in the South Caucasus, of course, relying on the allies, but without delegating to them the main strategic issues (as showed in case of Scenario #1).

The rising US presence in the region will provide Armenia with much larger opportunities. Particularly, Armenia can even try to position itself as a platform of cooperation between the US (and West, in general) and Russia. However, the rising West-Russia animosity might make Armenia to make a “geopolitical choice”, finding itself on a geopolitical fault-line.

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US POLICY IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS PRIOR TO AND AFTER THE 2020 KARABAKH WAR IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EVOLVING REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GEOPOLITICS

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Abstract

The article analyzes the main directions of US foreign policy in the South Caucasus before and after the Artsakh war in 2020, taking into account new regional and geopolitical challenges. It is shown that the United States considers the policy in the South Caucasus in the context of Russian-American relations. In recent years, the South Caucasus has not been included in the US foreign policy priorities, yielding to both the Asia-Pacific region and Ukraine. Under US President Trump, the three main US goals in the region were to include the South Caucasus in a policy of maximum pressure on Iran, launch the Southern Gas Corridor, and contain Russia. The US took a rather passive position during the 2020 Artsakh war, limiting itself only to calls for a cessation of hostilities and the organization of a meeting between the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Washington.

As a result of the study, it was substantiated that after the end of the Artsakh war, the main goal of the US was to eliminate the Russian monopoly in the process of resolving the conflict. After the outbreak of the war in Ukraine on February 24, 2022 and the complete breakdown of Russian-American relations, the weakening of Russia's position in the South Caucasus became the cornerstone of US regional policy.

Keywords: US, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, South Caucasus, Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, geopolitics.

Introduction:

The South Caucasus has a strategic location as a crossroad between Europe and Asia. As a part of the former Soviet Union, the region is included in the self-declared Russian zone of influence, as mentioned by then - Russian President Dmitri Medvedev in August 2008 (Kremlin.ru 2008).

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Given its land borders with Turkey and Iran, as well as natural resources and transit capacities to bring Central Asian gas and oil to Europe while circumventing Russia, the region has a role in US foreign policy. As a part of the former Soviet Union, the region was also included in the US policy of bolstering a transition from a totalitarian past to liberal democracy. However, the South Caucasus was not among the top US national security interests, and the American approach towards the South Caucasus was primarily influenced by developments in the US-Russia relations.

Another critical aspect shaping the US policy towards the region was unresolved conflicts in Nagorno Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia. The US considers both Abkhazia and South Ossetia part of internationally recognized Georgian territory. As an OSCE Minsk Group co-chair state, the US has been actively involved in the Karabakh conflict resolution negotiation process. Despite a sharp deterioration in the US–Russia relations since the start of the Ukraine crisis in 2014, until the start of the 2022 war in Ukraine, both countries continued to agree on the main principles for settling the Karabakh conflict. These principles were articulated in several statements by the US, Russian and French Presidents made in 2009–2012 (OSCE 2009).

Relations with the United States are of significant importance for Armenia. Despite the relative decline in the US position as the only world superpower, Washington remains the number one global power globally. The US is a Minsk Group Co-chair country, actively involved in the Karabakh conflict settlement process, and it exerts significant influence in the neighborhood of Armenia. America is also home to the most influential part of the Armenian Diaspora, which may play a key role in bringing needed investments into the Armenian economy. It also can be a source for, albeit a modest, yet significant, process of repatriation of Armenians from the Diaspora to the motherland, thus alleviating the demographic challenges faced by Armenia.

The main directions of the US regional policy prior to the 2020 Karabakh war (2017–2020)

As we mentioned, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US has perceived its relations with the region through the lenses of its overall policy towards the Former Soviet Union and Russia. We may identify several vital goals of the Trump administration in the South Caucasus.

The first is the region's involvement in the policy of 'maximum economic pressure' against Iran (Nuruzzaman 2020; Wallsh 2020). Both Armenia and Azerbaijan border Iran, and Georgia also may play a role as an alternative route for Iran towards Europe via Armenia and the Black Sea. The US policy aimed at decreasing the region's relations with Iran as much as possible. Iran's issue was the top priority for the US National security adviser John Bolton's visit to the region (Kucera 2018).

The second goal of the Trump administration was the facilitation of the launch of the Southern Gas Corridor¹, which would bring Azerbaijani gas to Europe, circumventing

¹ BP. 2021. "Southern Gas Corridor - project of the century." *BP p.l.c.*, 29 January 2021. Accessed September 1, 2022. <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/news-and-insights/reimagining-energy/southern-gas-corridor-special-feature.html>.

Russia, as was the case with Azerbaijani oil delivered through the Baku - Tbilisi - Ceyhan pipeline. The US had much less enthusiasm regarding the capabilities of Azerbaijan to strategically decrease Europe's gas dependency on Russia, as it transpired that Baku had only the potential to pump into Europe a maximum of 20 billion cubic meters of gas annually. However, despite the decreased significance of Azerbaijani gas for Europe, it still mattered for the US to have alternative gas supply routes to Europe (Mehdiyev 2018).

The third factor influencing US policy in the region in 2017-2020 was the policy of containment and deterrence of Russia. Despite the seemingly warm attitude of President Trump towards Russia and President Putin, the Trump administration adopted a strict policy towards Russia, putting various new sanctions in place and providing lethal weapons to Ukraine and Georgia (Miller 2018). As a part of the former Soviet Space, the South Caucasus was included in this containment of Russia policy. Washington aimed to prevent any possible increase of Russian influence in Georgia and Azerbaijan and decrease Russian involvement in Armenia.

The "maximum pressure campaign" against Iran created significant complications for Armenia. Given the geopolitical situation of Armenia, any deterioration in its relations with Iran, or significant destabilization in a neighboring country, would have serious detrimental effects on Yerevan. Iran, alongside Georgia, was one of the two land corridors connecting Armenia with the world. Despite the fact that Gazprom owns its Armenian part, the Iran-Armenia gas pipeline provides Armenia with a vital alternative for gas supplies (Danielyan 2008; Zarifian 2009; Kochnakyan et al. 2014). It has a 2.2 billion cubic meters annual capacity to cover all of Armenia's natural gas needs. For now, the pipeline is used only to supply gas, which is used to produce electricity and export it to Iran. Armenia also valued Iran's position in the Karabakh conflict. A Shia Muslim country, Iran had a balanced approach, de facto supporting the status quo before the 2020 Karabakh war. Thus, Armenia could not support President Trump's strict policy towards Iran and has to maneuver a thin line of not annoying the US too much and simultaneously at least preserving the current level of relations with Iran.

The development and launch of the Southern Gas corridor had a negative impact on Armenia. Even prior to the 2022 war in Ukraine, it increased the strategic potential of Azerbaijan, fostered the latter's relations with the EU and the US, and brought additional financial resources.

The Russia containment policy, with a possible decrease of Russian influence in the South Caucasus, could not make Armenia and Karabakh safer. Armenia should continue its multi-vector foreign policy, not putting all eggs into one basket. The cooperation with NATO through the Individual Partnership Action Plans, the 2017 Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the EU (EUR-Lex 2018), and the recent intensification of relations with China are all moves in this direction.

However, at least for the upcoming decade, none of these actors could bring Armenia the necessary level of security guarantees provided by its strategic alliance with Russia. Yerevan could not participate in any US-sponsored anti-Russian policies in the region without jeopardizing the security of Nagorno Karabakh and possibly Armenia itself.

Thus, none of the Trump administration's three regional strategic goals overlap with Armenia's national interest. Of course, it did not mean that Armenia should not have

relations with the US and should not make efforts to develop them. The main issues for Armenia during 2017-2020 were the US approach to Karabakh conflict and securing a positive US administration attitude towards bringing American investments to Armenia.

The 2020 Karabakh war and its geopolitical implications for Armenia

The 2020 Karabakh war has significantly impacted the regional dynamics in the South Caucasus. Experts and pundits have not come to a unified approach regarding the reasons and implications of the war. However, many agree that the primary beneficiaries of the war were Russia and Turkey. Kremlin reached perhaps its main goal in Karabakh - to put Russian boots on the ground, while it has also significantly increased its military presence in Armenia. Turkey has cemented its presence in Azerbaijan as a large part of Azerbaijani society believes that without Turkey's overt support and involvement, Baku could not win the war. Turkey also is a part of the joint monitoring center operating in the Aghdam region of Azerbaijan, though Turkey hoped to have more military involvement in the post-war Karabakh (Crisis Group 2021, 2022).

Another recurring topic in expert discussions after the 2020 Karabakh war is the decrease of Western influence in the region. The US and France, two other OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs, did not take part in elaborating the November 10, 2020, trilateral Armenia-Azerbaijan-Russia statement, which put an end to the war. Both countries made efforts during the war to reach a humanitarian ceasefire, but with no success. The 2020 Karabakh war coincided with the Presidential election campaign in the US, and many experts believe that this was the main reason why Washington was so passive during the hostilities.

Meanwhile, the South Caucasus was not on the US foreign policy priority list for quite a long time. Ukraine was a focus of Washington in the post-soviet space, while since the early 2010s, the general shift towards the Asia - pacific has been underway. This process was accelerated under President Trump, who launched a trade war with China². Trump's 'America first' policy and his disdain for the democracy promotion were perceived as another reason for the growing decline of US involvement in the South Caucasus.

The second Karabakh war ended with catastrophic results for Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic. The trilateral statement signed by Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani leaders on November 10 was tantamount to the capitulation of the Armenian sides³. During the 26 long years of negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group, several settlement plans have been elaborated and offered to the conflict sides - the phased deal in December 1997, the union state in 1998, the Key West deal in April 2001, the Kazan document in June 2011 and the Lavrov plan since 2015. However, none

² BBC. 2019. "Trump escalates trade war with more China tariffs." *August 2, 2019*. Accessed September 1, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-49199559>.

³ The Prime Minister of the RA. 2020. "Statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia, the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the President of the Russian Federation." *Press releases, November 10, 2020*. Accessed September 1, 2022. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/press-release/item/2020/11/10/Announcement/>.

were as disastrous for Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic as the trilateral statement of November 10, 2020.

Previous deals envisaged the return of territories considered by Armenians as a 'security zone' to Azerbaijan, but not all territories immediately, and with clear linkage with the future status of Nagorno-Karabakh. This status is to be decided either through future negotiations (December 1997 deal)⁴ or through a legally binding expression of will (Kazan document)⁵, or - as in the Key West model, Karabakh within the 1988 borders was declared as part of Armenia, but Yerevan obliged to provide a corridor from Azerbaijan proper to Nakhijevan⁶. Instead, the November 10, 2020 deal envisages the immediate return to Azerbaijan of all seven regions and accepts Azerbaijani control over 1400 square km of Nagorno-Karabakh proper. Thus, from 11450 square km of territory, only up to 3000 square km are left outside Azerbaijani control. Furthermore, there was not a single word about Karabakh's status, and Armenia agreed to provide a transport communication from Azerbaijan proper to Nakhijevan, which would be under the control of Russian border troops. The Nagorno-Karabakh Republic lost approximately 80 percent of its territory, while in the remaining parts, infrastructure was badly damaged. Some 90000 people have left for Armenia during the 2020 war, and at least 25000 cannot return as their lands are now under Azerbaijani control. Others should wait for the reconstruction of civilian infrastructure, which may take months, if not years.

Meanwhile, the deployment of the Russian peacekeepers in Karabakh has effectively made Karabakh a Russian protectorate. The governmental bodies of the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic nominally continue their activities (President, Government, National Assembly, Defense Army), but obviously, the real kingmaker in Karabakh is now Russia. However, the new war did not solve the conflict. Despite the disastrous defeat of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, up to 3000 square km of Karabakh territory is still inhabited by Armenians and is now under Russian control. These people will never accept any status within Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan has already stated that the status issue is closed for Baku.

The US position during the 2020 war

The decrease of the US attention towards the South Caucasus was once more emphasized during the 2020 war in Nagorno Karabakh. Besides calls to both sides to stop the fighting and the joint statements by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chair countries Presidents

⁴ National Assembly of the RA. 1997. "OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries: Agreement on the cessation of the Nagorno-Karabakh armed conflict. Preamble." *Document No.17, December*. Accessed September 1, 2022. http://www.parliament.am/library/LGH/doc_17.pdf.

⁵ The Prime Minister of the RA. 2021. "The Origins of the 44-Day War," an article authored by Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan." *Interviews and press conferences, January 4, 2021*. Accessed September 1, 2022. <https://www.primeminister.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2021/01/04/Nikol-Pashinyan-04-01/>.

⁶ CIVILNET. 2021. "A recap of the 7 plans proposed for the settlement of the Karabakh conflict." *October 23, 2021*. Accessed September 1, 2022. <https://www.civilnet.am/en/news/637117/a-recap-of-the-7-plans-proposed-for-the-settlement-of-the-karabakh-conflict/>.

(Kremlin.ru 2020), and the failed meeting organized by the US in Washington in late October 2020, there was no tangible action by the US government.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo mentioned Turkey's active involvement in the conflict and Ankara's support to Azerbaijan, arguing that third parties should not pour additional fire and expressing its hope that Armenians can defend themselves against what the Azerbaijanis are doing⁷. However, despite all the US-Turkey tensions during the Trump era concerning the purchase of S-400 air defense systems by Turkey, Washington's support for Syrian Kurds, and the growing authoritarianism of Turkish leadership, any increase in Turkey's role in the region was in line with the US strategic interests, as it would weaken Russia.

The contours of the Biden administration policy in the region prior to the 2022 Ukraine war

The election of Joe Biden as President of the United States has raised many hopes around the world that the era of American isolationism launched by President Trump has finally ended. Almost all were looking forward to the new American drive toward multilateralism and for the US to resume its leadership role in the 'liberal world order'. America's EU and NATO allies hoped for more US engagement in Europe, and a more consistent policy towards Russia, while the US Asian allies expected a more coordinated approach towards Asia.

One of the first steps of the new administration was the decision to bring back the US into the Paris climate agreements, raising expectations of an upcoming multilateralist agenda (The White House 2021a). The South Caucasus was not an exception in this context. Given the strategic shake-up in the region as a result of the 2020 Karabakh war, regional experts sought to understand what would be the US policy toward the new status quo that emerged after the November 10, 2020, trilateral statement of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Russia.

The Biden administration's willingness to extend the New START Treaty for five years, which otherwise was due to expire in February 2021 (The U.S. Department of State 2018), was an indication that the new US administration would seek to find common ground with the Kremlin. Some experts argued that the extension of the New START Treaty was probably the only issue where US and Russian interests overlap, while in all other spheres, the new administration would push forward a stricter policy towards Russia. Among the Armenian expert community, there was a general understanding that regardless of the ups and downs in the US-Russia relations, the US was dissatisfied with the outcome of the new Karabakh war, which saw the US and OSCE Minsk Group sidelined, increased the Russian influence in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, and made Turkey an influential player in the region.

According to this logic, the US would seek to challenge the new status quo in Karabakh, reinvigorate the Minsk Group activities, and end the Russian monopoly over

⁷ Deutsche Welle. 2020. "Nagorno-Karabakh: Fighting rages as Pompeo holds talks." *October 23, 2020*. Accessed September 1, 2022. <https://www.dw.com/en/nagorno-karabakh-us-hosts-warring-parties-as-fighting-rages/a-55378655>.

the conflict resolution process. The US would seek to replace Russian peacekeepers with OSCE or UN mandate international forces. Meanwhile, Russia will do everything to, in practice, prevent the resumption of the OSCE Minsk Group activities and to restrict the US and France's influence over future developments in Nagorno Karabakh.

The US might start the discussion within the Minsk Group to replace Russian peacekeepers with a multination force, but any such decision, either within the UN Security Council or within the OSCE, required Russian approval. If a decision were made in Washington to decrease Russian influence in the region as a part of a Russia containment policy, the main target would not be Karabakh but Armenia itself, since now Yerevan is more dependent on Russia than at any other time since the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, Azerbaijan at least has Turkey to balance Russian influence. Regardless of numerous disagreements and tensions between the US and Turkey, the only leverage for the US to counter Russia in the South Caucasus is Turkey, with or without President Erdogan. Because of the limited set of options, the US would most probably lean on Turkey leverage in the region; something that could complicate Armenia's regional standing and could potentially be detrimental to Armenia's national interests. Yerevan currently is virtually squeezed between Azerbaijan and Turkey and will be squeezed more if transport links from Turkey to Azerbaijan to the Nakhijevan Autonomous Republic via Armenia's Syunik region are opened. Despite all rhetoric that this will bring advantages to Armenia, as Azerbaijani and Turkish investments will pour into the country, the strategic goal of Azerbaijan and Turkey is to weaken Armenia as much as possible. Baku and Ankara are determined to force Armenians to forget about Nagorno Karabakh and essentially be transformed into a country where the local population will only serve as a low-cost working force.

Geopolitical context around the US regional policy

As we have already mentioned, in recent years, Russia-West relations reached their lowest point since the end of the Cold War. The Ukraine crisis, Russian military involvement in Syria, the alleged Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential elections, and the assassination attempt of Sergei Skripal; this is not the complete list of the West's grievances towards Russia. The Kremlin has its list - NATO enlargement, military actions against the former Yugoslavia, incursion to Iraq and Libya without UN Security Council resolutions, support to the alleged coup in Ukraine in 2014, interference into Russian internal affairs to execute regime change. It seemed that relations could not deteriorate further. However, since December 2021, Russia-US and Russia-NATO tensions have increased significantly. Russia prepared two agreements with the US and NATO, demanding to revise the post-Cold War European security architecture (Zakaria 1999). Russia demands to stop NATO enlargement, scale back NATO military infrastructure in the territories of the new NATO members, and significantly restrain NATO engagement with former Soviet Republics (Pifer 2021).

Russia's demands triggered a set of high-level negotiations: direct phone conversations between President Putin and Biden (The White House 2021b), discussions at Russia-NATO council and OSCE, and talks between US Secretary of State Antony

Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The US and NATO rejected the primary demands of Russia, calling them non-starters, simultaneously expressing their willingness to continue negotiations (Mearsheimer 2014; Herszenhorn 2022).

In parallel to these negotiations, a real drama evolved around Ukraine. The US claimed that Russia was preparing for a large-scale invasion of Ukraine and even decided to evacuate the family members of the US embassy in Kyiv. The US, UK, and some European countries started to supply Ukraine with lethal weapons, while Russia claimed Ukraine was preparing a military provocation along the contact line in Donbas.

As another tool of deterrence, the West threatened Russia to impose new, much tougher sanctions if Russia decided to launch a military attack on Ukraine. Several draft laws have been introduced in the US House of Representatives and Senate targeting Russia, including sanctions against President Putin. The Kremlin claimed that any such move would mean a ‘complete rupture of relations’, while some experts and pundits actively circulate the term ‘Russia-West decoupling’ as a potential outcome of the current crisis.

These tensions were underway under the background of the general transformation of the post-cold war world order. American undisputed hegemony is over, and the world slowly moves towards a new, multipolar global order with multiple centers of powers competing and cooperating with each other (Mearsheimer 2018). The US political elite understands that America’s rival is China in the long-term perspective, not Russia. Even if Russia is one of the poles in the emerging global order, it will be less influential than China (ODNI 2022).

While great powers flexed their muscles for the upcoming battles over the nature of the world order, the medium and small powers sought to assess the potential implications of Russia-West decoupling. In this context, the South Caucasus is an interesting case. Being part of the Soviet Union and after 1991, perceived by Russia as a legitimate zone of its special interests, the region has become a flashpoint for regional rivalries. In the first two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the security architecture was relatively straightforward. The US supported the Turkey-Georgia-Azerbaijan partnership versus the Russia-Armenia alliance, while Iran was de jure neutral but de facto supported the Russia-Armenia alliance.

Despite being fully anchored in the Russian sphere of influence, Armenia developed modest cooperation with the West, signed IPAPs with NATO, joined the EU Eastern Partnership initiative, and signed the CEPA with the EU in 2017 (EUR-Lex 2018). Azerbaijan pursued a balanced foreign policy, developing partnerships with Turkey and Russia and launching energy cooperation with the West.

Regional security architecture started to change in 2016. The key driver was Turkey’s strategy to transform itself into an independent regional player and bid farewell to its position as the sole provider of US interests in the Middle East, South Caucasus, Black Sea region, and Western Balkans. Russia sought to use this momentum and pull Turkey away from the US and NATO as much as possible, clearly understanding that Turkey would not leave NATO. As a result of that understanding between Russia and Turkey and the strategic blunders made by the Armenian governments, Russia allowed Azerbaijan and Turkey to start a joint war against the unrecognized Nagorno Karabakh Republic and change the regional status quo. After the signing of the November 10, 2020,

trilateral statement, Russia and Turkey continued to steer the developments in the region, pushing for restoration of communications, the start of Armenia-Azerbaijan border delimitation, and demarcation, and normalization between Armenia and Turkey.

The Victory of Joe Biden in the November 2020 elections seemed to bring the usual patterns of the US foreign policy back to the pitch. The notion “America is back” is perceived as a willingness to increase American involvement in the different parts of the world. The Biden vision of the 21st century geopolitics as a battle between democracy and authoritarianism arguably implies more US involvement in the Post-Soviet space to deter and counter authoritarian Russia. The word democracy is perhaps the most often used term in the “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance” published by the new administration in March 2021 (The White House. 2021c). Here Russia and China were defined as the main adversaries of the US, and in this context, they continued the ‘Return of the great power competition’ notion embedded in the 2017 US national security strategy.

The war in Ukraine and its impact on the US regional US policy

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a special military operation in Ukraine. Russian troops entered Ukraine from different directions - Crimea, Belarus, and mainland Russia. Russian actions created an acute crisis in West-Russia relations. The US, European Union, United Kingdom, Canada, and some Asian allies of the US, such as Japan and Australia, imposed severe sanctions on Russia, including cutting many Russian banks from the global financial messaging system SWIFT⁸. The Western powers significantly increased the supply of lethal weapons to Ukraine, including anti-tank missiles and portable anti-aircraft missiles.

The war in Ukraine unfolds within the tectonic transformations in the world order. The post-Cold War order was based on absolute US hegemony, dubbed by Charles Krauthammer as the “Unipolar Moment” in his famous Foreign Affairs magazine article (Krauthammer 1990). This era was marked by US efforts to extend the area of liberal democracies to cover former members of the Socialist camp in Europe. The enlargement of NATO and EU were the primary tools of this strategy.

The 9/11 attacks shifted the US focus to the war on terror in the Greater Middle East, but democracy promotion and the NATO and EU enlargement remained a priority for the Bush and Obama administrations. However, the world financial crisis of 2008 marked the beginning of the end of the “Unipolar Moment” (Zakaria 2008). It showed the limits of US geostrategic might, while other players, most notably China, Russia, and India, started their rise. The US sought to answer to the rise of China by launching the strategy of ‘Pivot to Asia’ in 2011 (Lieberthal 2011), while the Trump administration acknowledged the transformation of the world order towards multipolarity by embracing the notion of ‘great power competition’ in its strategic documents. The term is also crucial for the Biden administration, which overtly designated Russia and China as the

⁸ The Council of the EU and the European Council. 2022. “EU sanctions against Russia explained.” Accessed October 16, 2022. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/sanctions-against-russia-explained/>.

main rivals of the US in its “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance,” published in March 2021.

Meanwhile, under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin, Russia firmly believes that Russia should be one of the main pillars of the emerging multipolar world with the US and China. From the Russian perspective, the West used the moment of Russian weakness in the 1990s to shape the European security architecture in such a way as to violate vital Russian interests. Since President Putin’s famous Munich Security Conference speech in 2007 (Kremlin.ru 2007), Russia launched consistent efforts to upend the post-Cold War security architecture of Europe, demanding the recognition of its legitimate special interests in its neighborhood. The Russia - Georgia war in 2008 and Ukraine crisis in 2014 were the manifestations of Russian growing assertiveness and resentment over the post-Cold War European security architecture.

Meanwhile, the Russian leadership probably believes that without control over Ukraine, or at least without pro-Russian Ukraine, Russia has no chance of becoming an equal pole with the US and China in the coming multipolar world. Late Zbigniew Brzezinski captured this moment in his seminal work *The Grand chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, arguing that “Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.”⁹

Where does Armenia stand in all this turmoil? Armenia suffered a severe geopolitical setback in 2020 due to a humiliating defeat in the 2020 Karabakh war. The loss of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic-Iran border and the approximately 75 percent of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic’s territory significantly reduced the geopolitical potential of Armenia. The war resulted in a significant increase in Russian influence over Armenia. Currently, Russia is the sole guarantor of the security of Armenians living in Nagorno Karabakh. It also protects parts of the Armenia-Azerbaijan borders by deploying small military units in Ararat and Syunik provinces alongside Armenia-Nakhichevan and Armenia-Azerbaijan borders (Broers 2022; Hess 2022). Armenia faces multiple security challenges. It should prevent the exodus of Armenians from Nagorno Karabakh and manage the complex process of Armenia-Azerbaijan border delimitation/demarcation and Armenia-Turkey normalization process. Yerevan should not allow Azerbaijani and Turkish large-scale economic penetration in Armenia, especially in Syunik province, as Ankara and Baku do not hide their intentions to impose *de facto*, if not *de jure*, control over the Syunik to unite the ‘artificially separated Turkic world’ (Donmez and Rehimov 2021).

The immediate consequence of the ruined Russia-West relations will be the restricted flexibility of Armenia in its relations with the West. Yerevan should do everything not to cancel its relations with the Euro-Atlantic community, but keeping the same level of relations will be challenging, if not impossible. Armenia will also suffer economically due to the West’s economic war against Russia. It is too early to assess the potential damage to the Russian economy and provide detailed assessments of its implications for

⁹ The Guardian. 2014. “The significance of Ukraine on the geopolitical chessboard.” *March 20, 2014*. Accessed June 1, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/20/significance-ukraine-geopolitical-chessboard>.

Armenia. However, the impact of the 2014 Russian economic crisis on Armenia, which was triggered by limited Western sanctions, may tell us that Armenia will face serious ramifications.

Armenia cannot avoid the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine war entirely. However, Yerevan should avoid a complete rupture of its relations with the West while not irritating Russia. In this regard, discussions and votes in international bodies on the situation in Ukraine are pivotal moments for Armenia. No one should expect Armenia to vote for an anti-Russian resolution, as that vote will immediately put Armenian vital national interests under the threat. Meanwhile, the vote against the resolutions may put Armenia against the West.

The US policy in the region in the context of the Ukraine war

As of now, the Biden administration has not elaborated a new strategy for the South Caucasus. The US would not like to see Russian influence increase here; meanwhile, it is not in a position to force its desirable solutions in the region. Most probably, the US will imply a cautious approach, seeking to decrease Russian presence in the region through persistent efforts to push forward for continued liberal reforms in Armenia and Georgia using the US assistance and the US leading role in the international financial institutions as leverage to influence the policy of governments. The US views the EU involvement in the region through the Eastern Partnership initiative as an essential supplement to push forward this agenda and welcomes the recent EU announcement on the new aid package for the regional powers.

The US continues to believe that the economic cooperation between regional states will not only contribute to the de-escalation of the situation but, in the long-term perspective, will result in the decrease of Russian influence in Armenia as Yerevan will feel less threatened by Azerbaijan and Turkey and thus will have fewer incentives to be militarily tied with Moscow. In this context, the US will support the restoration of communication routes in the South Caucasus and establishing economic ties between Armenia and Azerbaijan and Armenia and Turkey (Vartanyan 2022).

As for the role of Turkey, the Biden administration may hate President Erdogan and desire his removal from power in the upcoming Presidential elections, but this does not mean that the US will act against the increase of Turkey's role in the region. Regardless of who sits in the Ankara Presidential Palace, more Turkish influence in the South Caucasus means less Russian presence, and all actors know this truth quite well.

Conclusion and discussion

The modern US foreign policy in the South Caucasus before and after the Artsakh war of 2020 is being transformed, trying to constructively resolve the unstable political situation and geopolitical risks in the post-Soviet space.

The issue of state-building and nation-building in the post-Soviet space continues to be debatable, since the South Caucasus has again become a place of confrontation

between the leading geopolitical and regional powers, primarily the United States and Russia.

The author seeks to trace the process of increasing the strategic importance of the South Caucasus as a crossroads of transport and transit energy communications in the era of the post-bipolar world.

This problem has been little studied and requires further study, since the South Caucasus began to occupy a special place in the foreign policy interests of the United States, Russia, Turkey, Iran and other countries. As a research task, the authors determined an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the US strategy in relation to the republics of the South Caucasus, taking into account a number of domestic political factors and understanding the doctrinal guidelines of Russia. In this regard, the strength of modern US foreign policy is understood as the ability to use its resources in the external environment, both real and potential, to achieve the desired goals in the South Caucasus.

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GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACHES IN CONFIDENCE- AND SECURITY-BUILDING MEASURES

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Abstract

The paper examines the existing issues and proposes new outlook on the solutions for incorporating gender-sensitive approaches in the sphere of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures in Europe (CSBMs). Based on a thorough consideration of the current practices and relevant documentation, the notion of gender-positive approach is introduced, while a set of particular measures for improving gender mainstreaming in the security sector is suggested. To assess adequately the degree of streamlining the OSCE's gender-related principles at local level and underline the existing gaps between theory and practice, short interviews were conducted with former and current female officers and specialists, engaged in human rights promotion in the defence and security structures. The paper concludes with the diagram offering interconnected steps to the efficient engagement of women in CSBMs.

Keywords: Gender-sensitive approach, confidence, security, Europe, OSCE, women's military service, security sector, peace.

Introduction

Integration of gender-sensitive approaches into the realm of security and peace, including conventional arms control (CAC) and confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) in Europe, is legally enshrined in the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the European Social Charter, the UN Resolution 1325 on women's role in peacebuilding and security (UNSCR 1325), PACE Resolution 2120 and more documents, toolkits, manuals and handbooks, which set the tone for mainstreaming inclusive standards (OSCE/ODHIR 2020; United Nations 1979, 2000; Council of Europe 2015; PACE 2016; OSCE 1994). However, when it comes to the realisation of these approaches and their practical aspects, things are less obvious.

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General expertise about the topic does not hint at any consensus. While some working documents indicate substantial improvement in gender mainstreaming policies in the given domains, especially over the recent years (OSCE 2018, 2019), other papers are full of scepticism, considering European conflict prevention policies and institutions as “gender-blind by design ... even when ‘successful’” (Davis 2018). As it will be shown further, the truth lays somewhere in between.

What optimists and sceptics of current gender mainstreaming practices in CSBMs do agree upon is the necessity to make gender-sensitive approaches more sensitive, as paradoxically as it may sound. That is, to identify and improve indicators of measuring success of gender policies beyond simple count of number of women in institutions and people trained. The Achilles’ heel of gender-sensitive methodologies is also the lack of clear explanation of how positive changes spill over in institutions from top to bottom and vice versa. Therefore, the current paper aims not only to show the pitfalls of gender-sensitive approaches in the security sector, but also to suggest practical steps for overcoming the obstacles and increasing applicability of gender-sensitive tools, especially at local levels. The methodology, utilised for this purpose, includes content analysis of the OSCE’s relevant key documents (in particular, the Vienna Document, the Treaty on conventional armed forces in Europe), local interviewing of women from the security sector of Armenia, as well as block diagram technique to demonstrate efficient women’s engagement in CSBMs.

Gender sensitivity as a fad vs. gender sensitivity as a rule

From the nature of aforementioned documents, postulating the importance of gender-sensitive approach, it is clear that implementation of the latter is directly connected with the extent of recognising human rights and capacities of women and men in the CAC and CSBMs. Security constitutes the core of CSBMs, however, constructing it would be impossible without human rights, which are gluing and cohering the whole architecture of European defensive solidity and thus should never be overshadowed by the focus of the OSCE, NATO, or CSTO on topical issues. Moreover: the idea to dichotomise human dimension against security, which is viewed to come at the expense of the former, is rather artificial and misleading. The success in combatting terrorism and human trafficking, in ensuring control over arms and their proliferation in Europe depends not only on the collective efficiency of technical measures applied. What is equally important, it relies on how these measures were established: whether they were set by and over qualifications, knowledge and expertise on the spot, or the genderly predetermined stereotypes.

This is widely accepted on paper, but not always followed in practice truth. As one of the female officers serving in the Armenian armed forces confirmed, as long as gender sensitivity is not instilled in the minds of affiliated with the security sector professionals, certain increase in the number of women in leadership, although registered, will not have any significant meaning, because women “do not have a situational influence on the

developments”¹. Considering how women’s engagement is evolving not only in Armenia but also in other OSCE participating States, proven by collected data (OSCE/ODIHR 2019), it would be fair to assert that on a broader European scale appointment of women to the leading positions manifests tribute to popular tendency, a fad rather than genuine willingness to benefit from their professionalism. The mere enrolment of women in the security and confidence building is not a manifestation of human rights per se and should not be regarded as an achievement. After all, numbers vividly evidence that women are still underrepresented in both quantitative (women generally involved) and qualitative (women in leading roles) terms². For example, only one female officer worked in the Arms Control and Peacekeeping Division in the Ministry of Defence of Armenia,³ while according to the former officer from the Security Council of Armenia, there is “a decline, locally and globally, of female participation in the decision-making process on security issues”⁴. Hence, the engagement of women and installation of gender-sensitive approach become an achievement only when:

- women occupy positions, including leading roles, not to govern abstractly, but to have the decision-making power;
- preventing, investigating and eradicating human rights violations against women in the security sector is equally tangible against men’s cases;
- methodologies, tools, procedures and trainings not only cover the topic concerned, but illustrate a roadmap for championing gender sensitivity.

A gender-sensitive approach, introduced formally but without explaining, following, and disseminating it equally among men and women, is doomed to failure. Under such conditions, promoted experts, servicepersons, and officers are limited to theoretical knowledge about their rights and obligations without means and capabilities to utilise it, which causes shortcomings in and uncertainty about consecutive accumulation of feasible betterments. For example, if women are trained to inspect and monitor arms control, stipulated by the framework of the CFE Treaty, but do not exercise the knowledge they gained due to subjective reasons, including cultural norms or traditionally preferential attitude towards male specialists in this sphere, they are not only deprived of human rights but also of professional capabilities for growth. This devalues not only the training received, but endangers the very realm of CAC and CSBMs, as the more communication goes solely among men, the more used they become to express masculinity and dialogue only with their male counterparts, condescending or ignoring female expertise and constantly finding justifications for such ignorance in the entrenched tradition of masculinity. The vicious cycle of reproduction of male dominance and gender blindness in the arms control and security can be overcome only when the gender sensitivity is learned in classroom but practiced in field. This is

¹ From the series of interviews with the female specialists in the security sector of Armenia, conducted for the current paper in the period of 26-29 July 2021.

² The current OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ann Linde is only the 4th female in that role from the list of 39 chairpersons since 1991. Women’s participation in 31 peace processes between 1992-2011, measured by UN Women, is as low as 9 per cent of negotiating teams and 4 per cent of signatories of peace agreements (Diaz and Tordjman 2012, 6-7).

³ From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

⁴ From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

particularly important for the states, where the gender sensitivity is still far from being full-fledged. As one of the interviewed female officers confessed, “If career advancement is not based on the principles of professionalism, professional competence and performance appraisal, then in societies like ours, where there are numerous barriers to women’s military service, from public perception and stereotypes to more institutional issues, women’s potential for peace and security will remain unrevealed”⁵.

In this respect, while recognising the importance of equality of male and female specialists in access towards capacity building, it is essential to take into account pole position of male pundits, called on to give opinion about the topic concerned more frequently, and traditionally weaker positions of female professionals to utilise their expertise. Therefore, it is rather gender-positive approach that should be exercised and replace gender neutrality in the area of security and arms control. Gender-positive approach does not utilise a one-size-fits-all equality, because original unequal conditions, under which male and female professionals have been initially developing, constructed the basis of human rights disparity that cannot be completely mitigated by later equal distribution of roles and associated responsibilities (Charlesworth 2005; Myrntinen and Daigle 2017). Instead, gender positivity presumes scrutiny of contextual risks and preconditions and, *mutatis mutandis*, smart and targeted decisions, based on such scrutiny. The goal to implement gender positive approach in and by the OSCE should be a cross-dimensional matter. It springs from the human dimension but naturally encompasses politico-military, and the economic and environmental dimensions too, as the success in reaching the targets in both dimensions can be secured via diversity of expertise, including gender diversity.

The next chapter, focusing on the OSCE’s key documents on CSBMs, will propose particular decisions for enhancing gender sensitivity and incorporating it enhanced into the practice of the Organization.

Identifying and overcoming the difficulties in gender sensitivity for CSBMs

The development and implementation of Gender and Security Toolkits, the efforts to promote Women, Peace and Security national action plans with the UNSCR, the trainings on gender equality organised for thousands of military personnel are all those essential pillars that established foundation for modern gender sensitivity in the OSCE’s structure and institutions. These policies became true impetus for more frequent and explicit discussions of topics covering gender abuse, sextortion, other forms of ill-treatment, or gender-based stereotypes (DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women 2019, 43-44). However, resistance to gender mainstreaming also remains high and adapts to changing environment. It is not only tools and methods that evolve, but also countermeasures and symptoms of gender discrimination (DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women 2019, 56-57). To tackle them effectively, it is important to maintain institutional coherence, transmit and adapt gender-sensitive approaches across all involved bodies (UN Women 2018; OSCE/ODIHR 2008). More rigour view proves that streamlining the

⁵ From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

approach to the local levels still remains an issue. For example, the questions concerning women's rights in the armed forces and gender discrimination are raised as separate chapters of the "Handbook on human rights of armed forces personnel...", published by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights in 2008 (OSCE/ODIHR 2008). However, in a similar by content and goals "Training manual for organizing and conducting a course on human rights and fundamental freedoms in the armed forces", prepared 5 years later by the OSCE Office in Yerevan, which in its essence refers directly to the aforementioned Handbook and "aims to raise awareness about human rights and fundamental freedoms among army staff" (OSCE 2013, 2), the questions of gender intolerance and mainstreaming gender-positive approach are barely touched. The Manual refers to only a few internationally adopted standards, such as CEDAW, but does not inform a reader about how these standards are applied locally, let alone integrated into the agenda of the armed forces. Another example is the local lack of awareness and communication about the OSCE's efforts in gender mainstreaming. From four female officers, interviewed for the current paper, who work for or have occupied the offices directly relevant to the protection of human rights in the security sector of Armenia, only one female was aware about the involvement of local female officers in the OSCE's missions regulated by the Vienna Document and the CFE Treaty⁶. Clearly, the production of toolkits on gender and security sector reform, or manuals on human rights in the armed forces is only a part of the bigger yet incomplete mission, aimed at ensuring full awareness of particularly female officers and specialists about how to use these toolkits. This in turn raises the question about disproportionality of women's engagement in the CSBMs in participating States, and the lack of effort from the states advanced in gender mainstreaming to share the respective knowledge with other states. It is not only the responsibility of states, who follow the lead, to absorb the knowledge on gender-sensitive approaches properly, but also of the frontrunners to deliver this knowledge wisely and ensure its local utilisation broadly.

The evidenced gaps raise two important concerns. First, about the extent of consistency and coherence in methodological approaches towards highlighting gender sensitivity in different OSCE representations. Second, about the extent where it would be possible to streamline the produced knowledge and corresponding gender-sensitive procedures, adjust them to the internal context of a country, and then follow them locally. A feasible solution for both concerns can be secured via cross-organisational cooperation, when the specific matter is considered in a versatile manner. That is, organisations learn from each other, exchange knowledge and best practices, improve transparency, interconnectedness and adaptability. This would be of special importance at the level of local representation, when the studies conducted on gender mainstreaming would provide a complex vision, derived from the work of several international organisations and embassies, while suggesting pinpointed improvements for domestic decision-makers. Similarly, it is important to familiarise beneficiaries with a wider range of internationally adopted forms and tools of gender mainstreaming and present practical ways of their adaptation to the regional juncture. If the gender-sensitive approaches are being enhanced within the OSCE's internal structure, the Organization should ensure

⁶ From the series of interviews, 26-29 July 2021.

positive spill over of these approaches for all participating States. This can be achieved by making the matter more vocal at formal events, as well as in field operations. In the latter case, unfortunately, the question of gender sensitivity is often regarded as a lower order issue, while it should be naturally included in many if not all OSCE's activities.

For the reasons stated above, it is crucial to include more female specialists in the inspections and monitoring missions of arms control stipulated by the CFE Treaty. Depending on the availability of respective professionals, the Protocol of the Treaty that covers inspection may be further elaborated to emphasise the importance of gender neutrality when selecting the inspectors, and the necessity to support female specialists, who possess sufficient expertise to be assigned as an inspector if they are underrepresented in a participating State (OSCE 1990).

Similarly, the principles deriving from the Vienna Document on CSBMs can be empowered by the updated mechanisms of monitoring gender sensitivity, introduced for the participating States. Such mechanisms, presuming ad hoc surveys, checking the profiles of potential employees on gender-based offenses and violence, and analysis of gender disaggregated data in the security domain, perfectly fit into the norms of exchange of information, stipulated by Article II of the Vienna Document (OSCE 2011). Understanding the degree to which gender-sensitive approaches are incorporated in the work of the security institutions, may help the participating States exchange relevant data on women's integration and personnel policies. Such efforts may be further underpinned by the establishment of structural units, which focus precisely on human rights and gender mainstreaming, e.g. human rights and integrity building centres, women's councils, women's integration unit. Similarly, inquiries within the Force planning point of Article II concerning training programmes may include requests to highlight peculiarities of the trainings through the prism of gender mainstreaming (OSCE 2011). The exchange of information on the matter concerned may be further enhanced through study visits (OSCE 2011), during which relevant governmental agencies, parliamentary bodies and ministries will present their best practices of protection of women's rights, their integration and professional advancement.

Women's participation and gender-positive approach should be further consolidated around other articles of the Vienna Document. As such, "contacts between relevant military institutions, especially between military units" may put an emphasis on the networking of women's councils from the participating States; female professionals should be particularly encouraged to participate in "exchanges and visits between members of the armed forces ... especially those between junior officers and commanders"; in observation of certain military activities; and in compliance and verification missions (OSCE 2011).

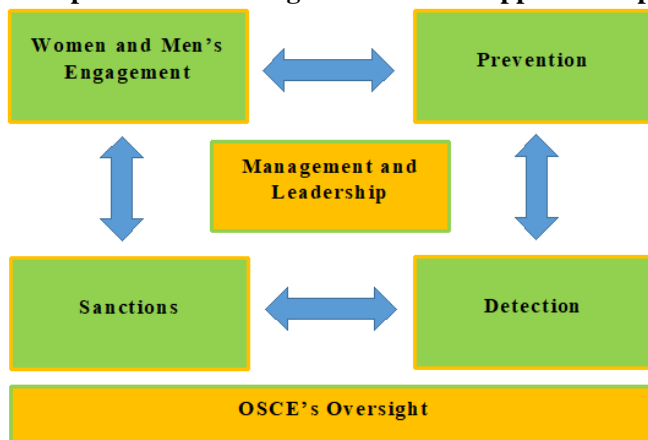
All in all, the measures suggested above can create new incentives for female professionals to choose or continue their path in the security sector, and empower more qualified women to demonstrate their experience and intelligence more vocally. The next chapter will summarise and conclude the main recommendations of the paper, presenting a diagram through which these recommendations can be followed.

Conclusion and discussion

Taking into account and accepting the criticism against still-existing gender blindness, a constructive approach has been taken to suggest meaningful and feasible alternative that can substitute the current practices of considering security sector as a sole prerogative of male experts. This approach comes with the gender-positive vision, which should serve as an impetus for inclusive and fair integration of female scholars and practitioners into the areas of arms control and security-building measures. The rigorous scrutiny of the OSCE's documentation and means to apply CSBMs allowed identifying those obstacles that hamper fair participation of men and women in decision-making. Based on the conducted analysis, a new set of recommendations has been developed to enrich the contribution of gender-sensitive approaches to CSBMs:

- The notion of “gender-positive approach”, understood as the scrutiny of contextual risks and, *mutatis mutandis*, the realisation of smart and targeted activities aimed at championing women's engagement in the security sector, should be included in the OSCE Glossary and in other relevant documents setting the foundations for upgraded gender mainstreaming.
- To promote higher interaction between human rights structures within the security sector (e.g. integrity-building centres in the ministries of defence, women's councils in the armed forces, etc.) of the participating States. If such structures are not well established or fully operational, to encourage study missions and vocational exchange of female servicepersons and experts, particularly from those states, where gender mainstreaming policies are not fully-fledged.
- To enhance engagement of female professionals in the military contacts and cooperation, as well as inspection missions agreed within the framework of the Vienna Document.
- To instil the practice of accumulating gender-disaggregated data in the security domains.
- To establish the institute of whistle-blowers or ombudspersons on gender affairs, appointed by the OSCE Secretariat or selected nationally in cooperation with the Secretariat, who ensure the adequacy of gender mainstreaming in the defence sector, signal gender-caused human rights violations, as well as execute psychological, moral and legal support to men and women who suffered from ill-treatment.

Consecutive implementation of the described activities will allow more diverse gender participation in CSBMs, while for female pundits already engaged, to establish networks of cooperation with their colleagues from other participating States.

Diagram 1. Implementation of a gender-sensitive approach in practice

The diagram, represented above, illustrates schematically how the gender-sensitive approach can be realised in practice. It begins with public education initiatives, awareness raising events and outreach campaigns aimed at engaging qualified female and male professionals in the security sector. The main objective set in this brick is to ensure accessibility of information about gender mainstreaming policies to larger audiences and, consequently, to motivate female specialists particularly to express their interest and knowledge more vocally.

The next three bricks, based on the already-selected female and male specialists who contribute to the aforementioned domain, illustrate interconnected mechanisms of prevention, detention and subsequent penalties (sanctions) of gender-based misconducts. These protective measures are designed to signal any violation of human rights and promote fair competition especially for decision-making positions.

Finally, the four bricks open the path towards establishing qualified and expertise-based management and leadership, constructed on the gender-positive approach. Each of these steps and the system as a whole are supervised by the OSCE's respective authorities, such as the proposed whistle-blowers or gender ombudspersons, who are assisted closely by competent representatives of civil society, external expert groups, and scholars.

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DRIVERS OF FISCAL RESOURCES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN RUSSIA: ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS REFLECTED IN REGIONAL DEBT

EVGENY TIMUSHEV *

Abstract

The paper seeks to clarify the consequences of fiscal institutions and centralization of intergovernmental relations in Russia related to regional debt sustainability and intraregional fiscal decentralization. The consolidated regional debt is considered to be the indicator that incorporates various features of institutional framework of the Russian budgetary system, while local fiscal decentralization reflects the number of fiscal resources at the local level. The relationship between governmental debt sustainability and fiscal decentralization is known to be a complex phenomenon. Yet under the analytical framework of this research, I show that the decrease of intraregional fiscal decentralization in Russia is attributable to the growing regional debt. Essentially, I conclude that centralization of intergovernmental relations in Russia leaves little room for maneuver for regional authorities and lead both to growing risk of debt sustainability and shrinking number of fiscal resources at the local level.

It is found that more prosperous Russian regions exhibit higher fiscal decentralization. This finding reinforces the established theory. However, in the rich northern regions of Russia dependent on oil, gas and other commodities the decentralization is relatively high, so some theoretical predictions seem to be misleading. Those unobserved factors remain to be investigated.

Further research agenda consists of conducting calculations based not just on pooled but panel data. It will help considering characteristics of each region. Furthermore, the results need to be reassessed for different indicators of fiscal decentralization.

Keywords: intergovernmental relations, fiscal institutions, local fiscal decentralization, debt sustainably, ordinary least squares, Russia.

Introduction

Achieving sustainable rates of economic growth depends on a successful governmental policy. Effective public sector hinges on a variety of institutional factors and features through which the governmental system operates. Mechanisms of fiscal policy

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encompassing the budgetary system and system of intergovernmental relations play a key role there. One of the issues in developing a working and stable budgetary system is the issue of decentralization of fiscal powers - how much of authority of forming and spending state funds is distributed among local and central governments. Fiscal decentralization defined as the process of distributing the powers within the budgetary systems related to disposing the budgetary funds forms one of the pillars of institutional structure of the fiscal system. The whole system of institutions within the fiscal system bears a significant impact on the business climate at the local and regional levels through measures of fiscal policy.

Decentralization of fiscal powers is tightly interconnected with the stance of regional or local government at the debt market. Regional debt sustainability is highly sensitive of the quality of the debt policy conducted by regional public administration. In turn, the scope of powers regulating regional borrowing and government debt are closely associated with the rights regarding formation of budget revenues and expenditures.

Due to both external economic factors and drawbacks within the intergovernmental system the issue of regional debt sustainability in Russia is viewed to be among the most complicated ones. Since the intergovernmental relations in Russia are highly centralized, endogenous tools of dealing with the problem of rising debt, for instance, design and implementation of special steps locally, might not be an option. Consequently, it should be some sort of federal programs aimed at alleviating the debt burden. Indeed, in practice the risk of low regional creditworthiness is now mitigated by recent federal initiatives. However, the problem is far from resolved. But there are also other aspects of debt sustainability at the regional level. Consider a number of unintended consequences of piling up debt and then reducing it. One of them is an impact from the regional debt and broader debt sustainability on distribution of budget resources within the regional budgetary system - intraregional (local) fiscal decentralization.

The relationship of debt sustainability and decentralization is not a simple cause-and-effect relationship but multidirectional and complex. It is highly vague and the topic remains to be explored. On one hand, most researches approach this issue from the perspective of behavior of local authorities at the debt market and what forces them to act one way or the other, given a certain amount of fiscal powers vested on them (see, for example, (Alexeev et al. 2019)). In other words, in those papers the impact from decentralization on regional public debt policy is analyzed. However, reverse relationship is also possible. For example, a large amount of debt and low debt sustainability could drive a regional government to accumulate and consolidate most of the budget funds in the regional system as well. It would lead to the lowering of the size of resources disposable by local administrations one way or the other. Ambiguous association between the two indicators and an unquestionable linkage between them could be utilized in various ways. But certain assumptions should be made.

One of the promising areas of research on the problems of fiscal decentralization is the very factors that cause it. There is a whole set of indicators known in the literature that affect the vertical distribution of fiscal powers in the federations. A lot of those factors are traditional indicators of social and economic development, such as personal income or degree of income inequality, for instance. At the same time, institutional features of the fiscal system that affect decentralization are much less studied. Such

factors are very hard to estimate and consider in a quantitative analysis. Moreover, in each fiscal system the intergovernmental relations related to the formation of tax and non-tax revenues and expenditure obligations are organized in a unique way. Nevertheless, they are as important in studying fiscal decentralization as those traditional indicators that are relatively well-probed.

The main focus of this paper is the determinants, or factors of fiscal powers and resources at the level of municipalities in Russia, that is, intraregional fiscal decentralization. Unfortunately, the power of decentralization to boost entrepreneurship and economic development is hardly used in the practice of public administration in Russia. Deeper knowledge of the relationship among institutional characteristics within the budgetary system opens up new perspectives as to how well it is organized, enriches our tools for estimating its overall performance, and shed light on what kind of incentives it creates for agents within the public sector as well as in the private sphere of the whole economy.

The aim of this study is to establish the role of a bundle of current institutional features of intergovernmental relations in Russia in shaping the level of intraregional fiscal decentralization. The regional debt is considered to be the indicator that incorporates various features of institutional framework of the Russian budgetary system. I expect the amount of consolidated regional debt to reflect the influence of institutional factors in an adequate way mainly because of the nature of indebtedness being dependent on other fiscal parameters within the system. Technically, the relationship of consolidated regional debt and local fiscal decentralization is analyzed in this paper, and the indicator of regional debt is held to be an independent variable. But essentially, the point is that under the conceptual framework of this research one could capture the fiscal incentives arising from institutional features at the federation-region level and generating responses at the region-local level where local fiscal decentralization is formed. The quantitative analysis of this study is conducted region-wise so that there is a sufficient pool of data required to find out more reliable information about the relationship among the variables.

The hypothesis of this study is that the growth of the debt of the Russian regions somehow leads to a decrease in fiscal decentralization within the regional budgetary system. There are at least two explanations for it corresponding one another. Firstly, the rise of debt level could cause the consolidation of funds in the regional budgets. This effect is supported and enhanced by the stated obligation by the side of the regions to primarily fulfill the priority-spending items at the expenditure side of the budget. This certainly affects the incentives of regional administrations to transfer funds to local governments. Secondly, the concentration of resources on the priority areas of budget expenditures and fiscal policy in general makes it hard for regional authorities to finance their own programs. In this case, decrease in regional transfers is expected since the regions generally have much more incentives to transfer funds to municipalities within their own spending initiatives. So, overall decrease in the amount of local resources follows, and fiscal centralization occurs.

Local fiscal decentralization

In the literature, there is a whole set of indicators that affect intraregional (local) fiscal decentralization. Theoretically, decentralization is promoted by high standard of living (Alexeev and Mamedov 2017; Panizza 1999). This could be captured by indicators of personal income, level of urbanization as well as low inflation and unemployment. Income disparity is more ambiguous predictor since it is often greater in high-income territories (Libman 2010). Population density, area of the territory and the population size matter as well. It is presumed that the more dispersed the type of settlement is, the less there should be fiscal and administrative powers at the local level of public administration. The reverse also holds true. Furthermore, Mohammad Arzaghi and J. Vernon Henderson (2005) note that decentralization is fostered by governance that is more democratic.

Heterogeneity of tastes regarding public policy is reported to be the main driver of decentralization (Boffa, Piolatto, and Ponzetto 2016). Economies of scope and public awareness from taxpayers also play a role and should be accounted for. Political economy factors are also at play both at national and intraregional levels. For example, decentralization is more common if the budget's defense burden is lower and tax revenues are institutionally less regulated (Bahl and Nath 1986). Regional governors are often deeply involved in the budget process and the more authority they possess over fiscal issues the more centralized are the budget expenditures (Baker 2000).

Lev Freinkman and Alexander Plekhanov (2008) classify all possible factors of local fiscal decentralization into two groups. First, the factors that capture demand for fiscal decentralization on the part of taxpayers. Second, the factors of supply of fiscal decentralization on the part of regional authorities. These researchers also point out the importance of such indicators as the share of incoming intergovernmental transfers in overall budget revenues and budget expenditures on housing and communal services. The former is supposed to reduce local powers while the latter is assumed to increase them.

The analysis of possible factors of decentralization found in the literature brings us to the following conclusions. Firstly, high values of most socio-economic indicators generally lead in practice to a fiscally decentralized system of public administration. Secondly, lagging positions by the main indicators of socio-economic development and the need for redistribution of funds lead to fiscal centralization.

Apart from predictors, the problem of assessment of fiscal decentralization is also worth mentioning. The correct estimation method regarding decentralization is a tricky question in itself. There is not a standard methodology for measuring the scope of powers of local authorities in the academic literature, as J. Harguindéguy and coauthors (2019) emphasize it in their recent paper. However, a fiscal approach, that is a calculation of the share of local fiscal parameters in general government total resources, prevails in quantitative studies. But concrete methodic nuances within that approach might also differ. For example, Antonis Adam and coauthors (2014) rely on OECD database and also on the effective estimates of tax decentralization elaborated by Dan Stegarescu (2005). They also use IMF databases, such as Government Financial Statistics (GFS). So, finding the right source of factual data on fiscal decentralization is an arduous attempt

in itself and a very complex issue. Besides, Jenny E. Ligthart and Peter van Oudheusden (2017) prefer using indirect indicators of decentralization, such as the nature of the legal system, the area of the territory and the density of location of large economic centers.

Although various research papers document numerous predictors of fiscal decentralization, knowledge of the composition of factors and the nature of their impact on fiscal decentralization is more or less formed in the literature. However, empirical analyses focused on individual budgetary systems often contradicts the established stylized facts. Indeed, practical “field” studies based on actual data in Russia show that in the regions with high income inequality, the size of fiscal powers of the local authorities is surprisingly high. Resource-rich regions in particular, where income distribution is very uneven, are, oddly enough, more decentralized. In addition, life expectancy is larger in the regions with low fiscal decentralization although favorable socio-economic environment is believed to generate more demand on local empowerment.

Meanwhile, the role of regional debt among factors of local fiscal decentralization received little attention in the literature. Still high level of debt could provide incentives for the administration to transfer part of the budgetary powers and resources to lower levels of the budgetary system. However, the more realistic implication seems to be that highly-indebted regions tend to consolidate money resources in order to possess more autonomy over fiscal spending. That autonomy becomes critical with regard to the current administrative aspect of separation of expenditure obligations in Russia and general institutional environment.

Main methodological features

Here are the main methodological features of this study.

First, the amount of debt is considered to be the main indicator of debt sustainability and a proxy of whole institutional features of intergovernmental relations at the federation-region level. The consolidated debt of the subjects of the Russian Federation is analyzed, that is, the sum of regional and municipal debt without adjusting for budget or treasury credits, that is loans from regional to local governments. The indicator is taken as the ratio per unit of tax and non-tax revenues of the consolidated regional budget. The fact is that the analysis of municipal debt is no less important than the regional debt itself. For example, at the level of Russian cities a high amount of debt has been accumulated recently and mainly for the purpose of carrying out current, not capital, expenditures (Zemlyansky and Medvednikova 2021). Apparently, the issue of effective debt policy at the regional level are closely connected with the issue of fiscal independence not only of regional, but also of local governments.

Second, in calculating the indicator of intraregional fiscal decentralization I follow the approach by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Table 1). Accordingly, local spending and revenues are adjusted for and divided by consolidated regional spending and revenues.

Table 1. Indicators of intraregional (local) fiscal decentralization

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Formula</i>
Expenditure local decentralization	$\frac{\text{Own local spending}}{\text{Consolidated regional spending}}$
Revenue local decentralization	$\frac{\text{Own local revenues}}{\text{Consolidated regional revenues}}$

Source: IMF.

In theory, the majority of variation of the metric of local fiscal decentralization can be explained by drivers of demand and supply. However, I presume that some part of fluctuation of the dependent variable could also be explained by the indicator of regional debt (1).

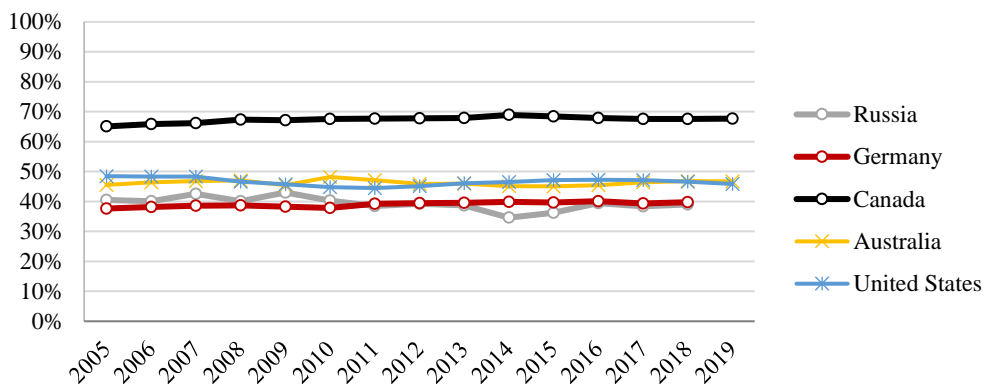
To conduct the formal quantitative regression analysis, I employ a simple ordinary least squares method. The period of analysis is 2011-2020. All subjects of Russian Federation are included in the estimation except Moscow, Saint-Petersburgh, Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

$\text{Local fiscal decentralization} = f(\text{Demand, Supply, Debt})$	(1)
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The linear approach towards exploring the factors of fiscal decentralization has its limits (Delgado 2021). However, a heterogeneity in observations within a single federation is likely to be not so large as to prevent from applying simple regression analysis.

Fiscal decentralization and government indebtedness in Russia

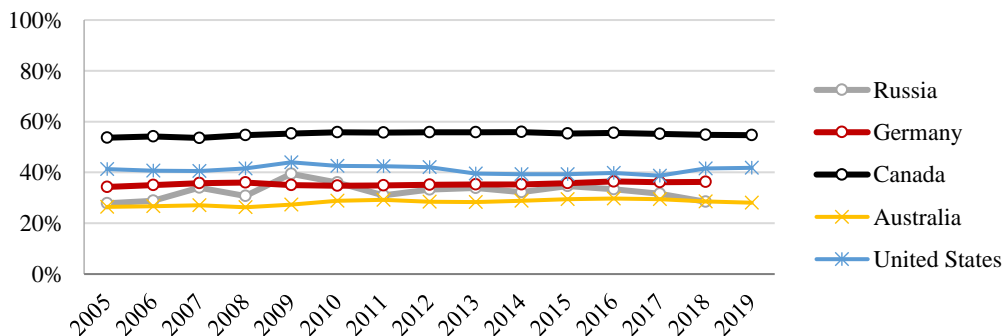
Subnational (parameters of regional plus local budgets excluding the funds transferred from one to the other) fiscal decentralization in Russia is small compared to other federative states. According to IMF, the share of regional expenditures was around 40% in 2005-2018 and comparable to that of Germany's. It is significantly less compared to that of Australia and the U.S.' and a way less as compared with Canada's (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Subnational expenditure fiscal decentralization (in %)

Source: Fiscal Decentralization Database, IMF. Accessed June 6, 2022.

<https://data.imf.org/?sk=388DFA60-1D26-4ADE-B505-A05A558D9A42&sId=1479329132316>.

On the revenue side, the subnational fiscal decentralization in Russia is smaller which is also the case for all the rest states (Figure 2). It is around 35% and similar to Germany's and Australia's. The revenue fiscal decentralization in the U.S. and Canada is noticeably higher.

Figure 2. Subnational revenue fiscal decentralization (in %)

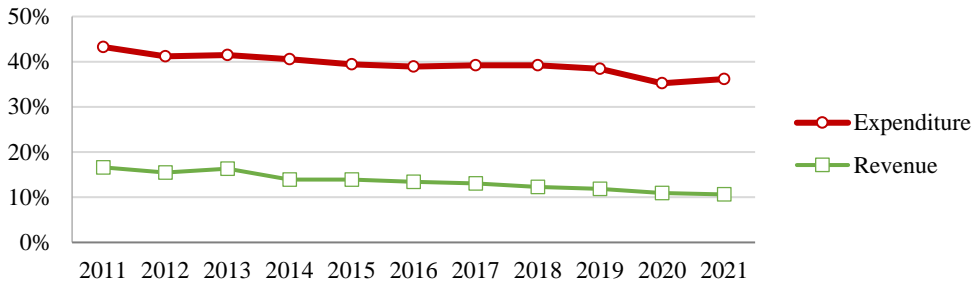
Source: Fiscal Decentralization Database, IMF. Accessed June 6, 2022.

<https://data.imf.org/?sk=388DFA60-1D26-4ADE-B505-A05A558D9A42&sId=1479329132316>.

One can clearly see the trend of squeezing amount of funds at the local level in Russia at least since the beginning of 2010s (Figure 3). Decrease of local fiscal decentralization is seen to have happened at both aspects of the budget - expenditure and revenue. Huge disparity among them is explained by the method of calculation (Table 1) and, particularly, very large amount of intergovernmental transfers from regional to local

levels. It is estimated to be around 20-25% of consolidated regional spending and revenues.

Figure 3. Local fiscal decentralization in Russia (in %)

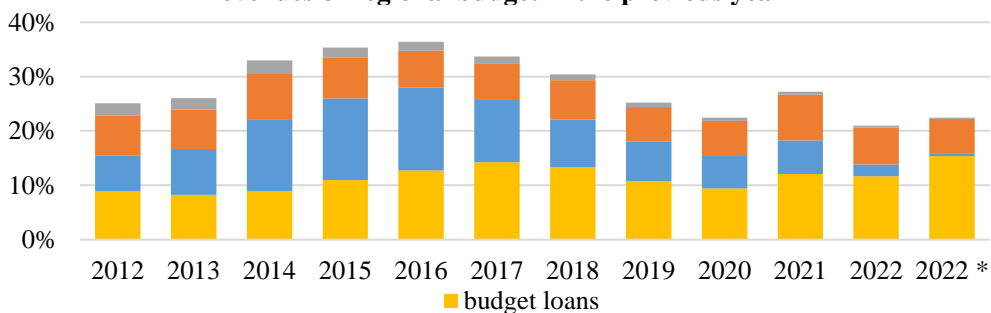


Source: author's calculations based on the data from Treasury of Russia.

Note: average for all the Russian regions.

Regional debt in Russia soared in 2014-2016 but later diminished (Figure 4). To keep debt sustainable, the federal government prohibited regional authorities to take on spending in the areas that belong to their own (exclusively regional) fiscal jurisdiction. Such spending programs also could not be financed by general transfers from the federal budget. The debt grew again in 2020 but less rapidly thanks to generous financial support from the federal budget. Rising own revenues, a year later in 2021 and further in 2022 brought the level of debt back. However, the decline of the “private” component and growing share of the federal loans in the structure of debt became the most vivid characteristics of regional debt dynamics in Russia in the last decade.

Figure 4. Regional debt in Russia at the beginning of the year, per tax and non-tax revenues of regional budget in the previous year



Source: Ministry of Finance of Russia. Accessed November 1, 2022.

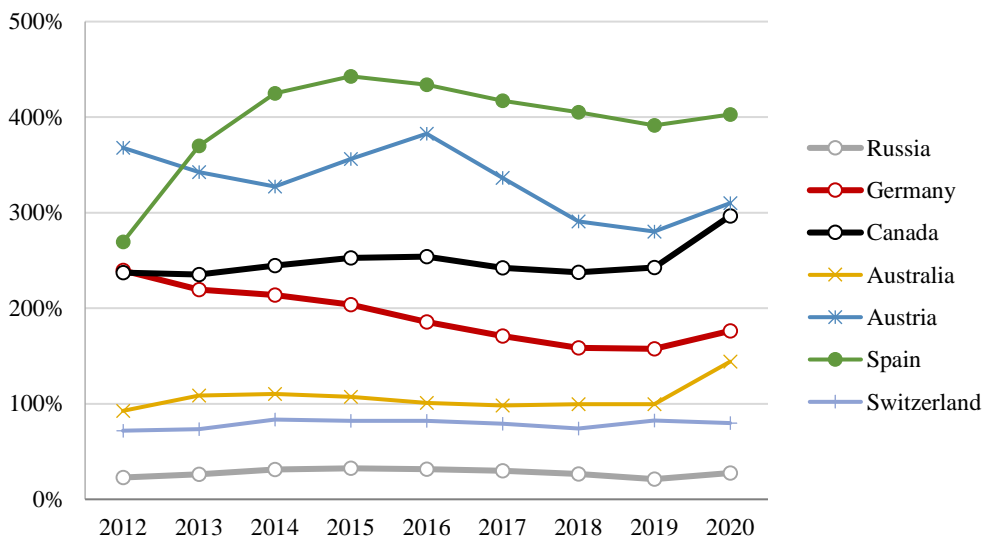
https://minfin.gov.ru/ru/performance/public_debt/subj/.

*Note: * on August, 1, 2022.*

Regional debt in Spain and Austria is the highest and approximately three and four times more the amount of own revenues the respective regional governments in that countries accumulate every year (Figure 5). This is explained not only by the high level of debt but also little size of tax and non-tax revenues of the budgets. In contrast, in Russia the regional debt is the smallest and around 30% of own revenues. However, debt sustainability as a more complex phenomenon is still a problem in Russia mostly because of the institutional characteristics of the intergovernmental relations. For example, the effective debt policy is hindered by the lack of authorities at the regional tier over it.

At the beginning of 2010s the debt levels in Canada and Germany were almost identical, though later experienced different trajectories. Likewise, in Australia and Switzerland the amount of regional debt was approximately the same and matched the size of own revenues. Interestingly, in all the states but Russia and Switzerland the regional debt significantly increased for 2020 when the coronavirus pandemic occurred.

Figure 5. Regional debt, per tax and non-tax revenues of regional budget



Source: Government Finance Statistics Database, IMF. Accessed June 1, 2022.

<https://data.imf.org/?sk=388DFA60-1D26-4ADE-B505-A05A558D9A42&sId=1479329132316> (author's calculations).

Regression analysis

The negative impact of regional debt on local fiscal decentralization is sustainable and found both for expenditure and revenue decentralization (Table 2). Thus, the higher the debt, the lower the intraregional fiscal decentralization with plenty of other predictors on demand and supply sides of decentralization accounted for. Proportion of the variation of the debt predictable from the independent variables is rather high especially for the revenue local fiscal decentralization.

There are several regressors that have statistically significant coefficients both for expenditure and revenue local fiscal decentralization. Surprisingly, the more the population density and life expectancy, the less the size of local fiscal decentralization. However, high degree of transfer dependency of regional budget and size of social expenditures also drive decentralization down, which is in accordance with the theory. Large values of personal income are mainly reported in more decentralized regions, which is also anticipated. The negative sign for the share of the mining industry in GRP is documented in academic literature as well.

Modelling revenue local decentralization exhibits more predictive power and has more statistically reliable coefficients. Notably, the more the share of the population living in urban conditions and the more the income disparity in a region, the more the revenue local decentralization is. This inconsistency with the theory is explained by unexpectedly high actual values of local decentralization in resource-rich northern territories of Russia.

Interestingly, the dummy for 2014 is also statistically significant for revenue local decentralization which is explained by the regulative decrease of the local budgets' sharing rate of personal income tax that year.

Table 2. Regression results

Indicator / Dependent variable	Expenditure local decentralization	Revenue local decentralization
Intercept	0,73 ***	0,11 **
Debt, %	-0,04 ***	-0,01 **
Population density, people per km ²	-0,00 ***	-0,00 *
Average monthly nominal personal income, thousand rubles per person	0,10 ***	0,07 ***
Share of urban population, %	-0,05	0,08 ***
Gini coefficient, 0-1	-0,13	0,15 ***
Life expectancy at birth, years	-0,01 ***	-0,00 ***
Share of the mining industry in GRP, %	-0,01	-0,05 ***
Share of incoming intergovernmental transfers in the regional budget, %	-0,11 ***	-0,06 ***
Expenditures of consolidated regional budget on social policy, thousand rubles per person	-0,01 ***	-0,00 ***
Expenditures of consolidated regional budget on housing and communal services, thousand rubles per person	-0,00	-0,00 ***
Dummy for 2012	-0,01	0,00
Dummy for 2014	0,01	-0,01 **
Jarque-Bera test	0,00	0,19
Breusch-Pagan test	0,19	0,08
Durbin-Watson test	0,08	0,00
R ² adjusted	0,29	0,59

Indicator / Dependent variable	Expenditure local decentralization	Revenue local decentralization
No. of observations	810	810

Source: author's calculations.

*Note: * - coefficients significant at the level of 10%; ** - at the level of 5%; *** - at the level of 1%. The p-value is specified for the tests, and high values indicate that the prerequisites of regression analysis are met.*

Discussion and Conclusion

Given that intergovernmental relations in Russia are driven mostly by federal level, each fiscal indicator at the regional tier, especially a debt, is closely associated with institutions regulating the whole regional fiscal policy. That is a general premise this study was based upon. Therefore, the amount of debt and a broader status of debt sustainability could be modelled as a proxy of that system of fiscal institutions.

Fiscal decentralization is also a prominent characteristic of fiscal institutions of a budgetary system. The relationship between governmental debt sustainability and fiscal decentralization is a complex phenomenon and hardly follows cause-and-effect pattern. However, both indicators without any doubt reflect complicated institutional composition of the budgetary systems and intergovernmental relations. One strand of the literature on fiscal federalism states that fiscal decentralization is shaped by various forces. All of those forces, however, could be seen as reflecting the demand for local fiscal powers and the willingness of regional authorities to provide the local authorities with the rights to regulate a certain part of intergovernmental relation. At the same time, the amount of debt might also impact the fiscal incentives related to the distribution of fiscal resources inside regional budgetary systems.

Sticking to those premises stated above, the study confirmed the hypothesis of decreasing intraregional fiscal decentralization due to the growth of consolidated debt of the subject of the Russian Federation. I corroborate that the centralized character of intergovernmental relations in Russia and little room for maneuver for regional authorities lead both to growing risk of debt sustainability and shrinking number of fiscal resources at the local level. Both of that definitely are the consequences of ineffective fiscal institutions. The resulting high risk of poor fiscal performance reflect distorted incentives of regional authorities. Those incentives arise from the need to consolidate scarce fiscal resources of the regional budget to fund the priority items of expenditures. Such prioritization is made compulsory by federal government and reflects the characteristics of Russian model of fiscal federalism. Low spending powers of regions and the rigidity of federal regulation of spending and debt policy complicate allocation of funds among expenditures items. Yet financing of those areas of expenses is mandatory for regional authorities and end up diverting resources away from public sector at the local level.

Other findings further contribute to the theory of drivers of fiscal decentralization in a centralized federative system. Overall, I confirm that more prosperous Russian regions in terms of taxable income exhibit higher share of local fiscal parameters. In addition,

administrative regulation of sharing rates is found to be important and accounted for. The elements of inconsistency with the theoretical prediction are likely to be explained by the rich northern regions of Russia where the share of local budgets in general regional budget parameters is high. Other forces of local fiscal decentralization seem to operate there in the North, and they need to be further investigated.

Finally, the areas of further research include conducting calculations based on panel data, thus taking into account characteristics of each region and, afterwards, refining the results obtained for different indicators of decentralization.

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AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE DISSIDENT PARADIGM AND INTERSECTING CIVIL PROTESTS IN SOVIET ARMENIA: EQUAL BUT DIFFERENT?

ARMENAK MANUKYAN 

Abstract

The article analyzes alternative dimensions of dissidence and civil protests in Soviet Armenia, which covers the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, from the Khrushchev Thaw to Gorbachev's Perestroika. Comparative study of the dissident paradigm has political and civilizational significance. The dissident paradigm is precisely associated with the entire human rights movement, and human rights activists were those who were called dissidents. Thanks to them, ideas of an alternative development of Soviet society and public authorities emerged.

At the present stage, the democratic rights of citizens, for which the intelligentsia and human rights activists fought in the 1960s-1980s, are proclaimed and enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia. But this does not mean that the issue of human rights has been resolved in reality, since in reality human rights are often violated, first of all, by the public authorities themselves. The experience of the first generation of human rights defenders continues to be of interest to numerous committees and commissions advocating respect for the constitutional and legal rights of citizens.

The relevance of the research topic is due to the fact that the processes of formation of a democratic society and the rule of law in modern Armenia put forward the task of effectively protecting human rights and freedoms. Given the fact that the recognition of human rights as a basic value was the result of a long evolution of society, it is important to see that their prerequisite was the struggle of the most socially active people for the possibility of civilizational development.

Keywords: dissident paradigm, totalitarian ideology, Soviet Armenia, Soviet power, socialism, intelligentsia, anti-Soviet organizations, Armenian diaspora.

Introduction

The relevance of this article is that dissent as a political and social phenomenon did not disappear without a trace along with the collapse of the totalitarian system of the Soviet Union, but only received new forms and ideological directions.

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Soviet dissidence had a key influence on the development of oppositional processes in other countries of the socialist bloc, and became a significant international factor during the existence of the Soviet Union. Open opposition to the government on the part of the left political forces, aggravated interethnic conflicts, sometimes developing into armed conflicts, the threat of a hybrid war, increased xenophobia and aggressive religious organizations, make it the most important moment of the modern historical situation. Being a reflection of the ideological and spiritual crisis of Soviet society, the dissident movement clearly reflected the struggle of opinions on the essential issues of our time, revealed a wide range of development alternatives related to the choice between West and East, between European and Eurasian values, originality and borrowing world experience, religious morality and atheism, internationalism and nationalism.

Dissidence in Armenian society, including the Soviet period of its development, has always existed, both at the social and personal levels, making itself felt most during the years of crisis for Soviet society. The manifestations of crisis phenomena for the last decades of Soviet power are especially characteristic. Nevertheless, for many years in the Armenian historical science of the second half of the 20th century, almost nothing was said about dissidents in the Soviet Union, about the existence of this movement in general. This, first of all, was connected with the political regime that existed in our Soviet Armenia. The current state of social and political life in Armenia necessitates a scientific critical analysis of the entire spectrum of views on the very recent past in order to scientifically comprehend the events in order to determine the further direction of development of the Armenian society.

In a country of 'developed' socialism, civil dissent and the dissident movement were ideologically prohibited and, naturally, fell under the totalitarian regime and repressive bureaucracy of the Soviet Union (Alexeyeva 1985; Alexeyeva and Goldberg 1990; Bergman 1992; Kukulin 2011). In this sense, in the context of the transformation of political systems in the post-Soviet republics, special attention should be paid to the comparative study of the limited civic activity and political life of the Soviet Union. Political studies of the dissident movement that formed in the 1960s, with its ups and downs, played a humanistic role in the political transformation of Soviet society, so its study is important from the point of view of a complete understanding of the political life of those years (Nathans 2015; Sharlet 1977, 1978; Laycock 2016).

The dissident movement also formed in Soviet Armenia in the 1960s, had its own characteristics, was purely national in nature, and its leaders also played an important role in the political events of this period. Taking into account that the materials of the archive of the National Security Service of the Republic of Armenia on this issue cannot fully reflect the reality, therefore, one should pay attention and use sentences to dissidents, as well as publications in the media. The few articles, memoirs and other publications found here are compared with similar processes that took place in the Soviet Union. However, I believe that this study provides a sufficient basis for the formation of a general idea about the Armenian dissident movement, in particular about the reasons for its emergence, national ideological orientation, stages of activity and significance.

Since the 1950s, the Bolshevik 'spirit' of rejection and condemnation of the common system of values for the Armenian people in Soviet Armenia has been internally split and divided between the negative attitudes of the Stalinist type of Bolsheviks and the

attempts of a new generation of Armenian communists to bridge the gap between Marxism-Leninism and national history and traditions. This phenomenon led to the fact that in Soviet Armenia a wave of national and political 'awakening' began, to a certain extent allowed from 'above', and to a certain extent maturing spontaneously. Moreover, unlike the diaspora, in Soviet Armenia, the national ideology penetrated into the consciousness of the people, first of all, breaking through culture and art, and especially literature, which created more opportunities for the legalization of all this through official propaganda. As a result, an ideological and political movement began in Soviet Armenia in the mid-1960s, aimed at restoring national rights, international recognition, condemnation and compensation for the Armenian Genocide.

All this begins to focus on the national ideology, the provisions of which are gradually adapting to the Armenian environment. It is very precisely determined that in the conditions of totalitarian prohibitions and restraint of human aspirations, a type of socially indifferent people, imbued with irony and pessimism, was formed in the Soviet Union. Under those conditions, joining dissent already required certain human qualities that should be appreciated. The significance of dissident activity lies in the fact that they dared to fight against totalitarianism, and in Soviet Armenia they raised the question of creating an independent statehood.

From a dissident intellectual to a human rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s

In the mid-1960s, a dissident movement was formed in the Soviet Union, which was not homogeneous, as it included people with monarchist, anarchist, technocratic, and nationalist views. Essentially, the dissent united only their public attitude and civil position. In this sense, the dissident movement is classified into the following three main directions: Leninist communist (Roy Medvedev), liberal democratic (Andrei Sakharov), and religious nationalist (Alexander Solzhenitsyn). As can be seen, over time the figures who became the leaders of the aforementioned directions had radical differences in their views, so we cannot talk about the unity of that movement (Boffa 1996, 88). This is even more evident when we compare the manifestations of dissent in Soviet Russia, particularly in its large cities and national republics. When we compare it with the processes taking place in Soviet Armenia (Virabyan 2001), it is obvious that the dissident here was mainly of a national nature and had almost no practical connection with dissident movements of a similar or different nature in other Soviet republics.

In the mid-1960s, the human rights movement was born among the dissident intelligentsia, which became the core of all dissident movements. One of the objective reasons for its occurrence was that the authorities backed away from the course of further democratization of the Soviet society. The arrest of two Moscow writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yulia Daniel in September 1965 and their conviction under Article 70 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (RSFSR) became an opportunity for the emergence of the human rights movement. This meant that they were charged with anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda aimed at disintegrating or weakening Soviet power (Caute 2010, 219-228, Simmons 1966).

In 1965, on the day of the Constitution of the Soviet Union, several hundred people took to Pushkin Square in Moscow (Litvinov 1969), demanding respect for the basic principles of the Constitution of the USSR, that is, at least to ensure an open trial of Sinyavsky and Daniil. This demonstration was dispersed by the police, and some participants were arrested and expelled from universities and institutes. The trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel was allegedly public, but had no effect. Moreover, their sentences were extremely harsh, as the court sentenced them to life imprisonment under strict conditions. The staging of the process caused a strong reaction in the countries of Western Europe, both at government levels and among civil society activists. About this, Alexander Ginzburg, a well-known Soviet dissident, sentenced to 2 years for publishing the Samizdat journal "Sintaksis" (Johnston 1999; Komaromi 2004, 2012), wrote a "White Book on the Siniavskii-Daniël' case" (Ginzburg 1967; Skilling 1989; Pieralli 2021). It is no coincidence that already in 1966 a new article 190.1 was added to the Criminal Code of the USSR, according to which up to three years of imprisonment were provided for the dissemination of fabrications discrediting the Soviet state and public order. It should be noted that all this was a sign of the informal civil cultural and activity of that time, since through such publications a shadow space developed for discussing the ideas of humanization of society (Medvedev 1972a, 1972b; Sakharov 1990). It was in such typewritten journals, in which literary works were published, that the obstacles from Soviet censorship disappeared. Many people started talking about "Sintaksis", it was reprinted quite widely, and it became a noticeable phenomenon in cultural and social life. Ginzburg's publishing activity thus anticipated some of the key principles of dissident activity in the second half of the 1960s and 1970s (Skilling 1989; Pieralli 2021).

In 1968-1983, the information bulletin "Chronicle of current events"¹ was of great importance for the dissemination of the ideas of the dissident movement in the USSR. The main content was about violations of human rights and freedoms in the USSR and ways to overcome them. From the point of view of the totalitarian regime, the so-called 'undesirable' works of Soviet authors are beginning to be published in Western Europe, for example, Roy Medvedev, Andrei Sakharov, Andrei Amalrik, Alexander Solzhenitsyn's stories, Vladimir Maksimov's novels and others (Medvedev 1972a, 1972b; Sakharov 1990; Amalrik 1971, 1978). The fact is that the dissident movement has become an integral part of Soviet political history, which manifested itself in its own way in Soviet Armenia. Since the Soviet dissident movement was multilevel, it is difficult to estimate how many people were involved in it, but it is clear that these people have become a symbol of civic courage.

Among the various manifestations of the intelligentsia in some Soviet republics (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Georgia), manifestations of national revival had the greatest influence. It should be noted that all this was also in Soviet Russia, where the supporters of the national ideology expressed the sharpest position in relation to the state order and totalitarian ideology (Kneen 1998; Martin 2019; Monshipouri 2016).

The Armenian people carried in their national memory the ideas of the Armenian Genocide, the loss of the territories of historical Armenia, and it was thanks to the revival of these ideas that dissident and anti-Soviet organizations arose. Naturally, they

¹ Historical and educational center "Memorial". Chronicle of Current Events. Accessed November 1, 2022. <http://old.memo.ru/history/diss/chr/index.htm>.

promoted slogans related to the ideas of independence, statehood and liberalism. And after World War II, thanks to the intelligentsia, the political processes that took place in Soviet Armenia actually contributed to the formation of nationalist ideas in the Armenian society, especially among the intelligentsia. *First*, the participation of the Armenian people in World War II, during which the wave of patriotism rose quite a lot, many patriotic literature and national works were created (Derenik Demirchyan, Stepan Zoryan, Nairi Zaryan and others). *Secondly*, the pressure on the Armenian Apostolic Church eased somewhat, because in 1945, after a long break, the elections of the Catholicos were allowed. *Thirdly*, it was a very encouraging fact for the Soviet Armenian leadership and party activists that after the end of World War II, the Soviet leadership carried out diplomatic work, trying to take back from Turkey and unite a part of the Armenian historical territories with the Soviet Union. The fact that Grigor Harutyunov, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Armenia, formulates a political question about the reunification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia is also evidence of the nationalist views of the Armenian intelligentsia and even the communist party leadership (Virabyan 2001, 74). Naturally, one hundred thousand Diaspora Armenians who immigrated to Soviet Armenia from foreign countries in 1946-1948 contributed to the rise of national feelings.

The presence of national ideas in society was evidenced by the mass demonstrations and rallies held in Yerevan on April 24, 1965, which were related to the 50th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. In fact, the main demand of those spontaneous speeches was the restoration of historical justice and the return of the historical homeland (Aleksanyan 2016, 22-25; Harutyunyan 2015). Here, I consider it necessary to pay attention to the fact that thanks to the efforts of the party leadership of Soviet Armenia, the leadership of the USSR allowed for the first time on the occasion of the Armenian Genocide Day to organize a meeting of society representatives in the Opera and Ballet building of Yerevan. Furthermore, a decision was made to build a memorial complex dedicated to the memory of the victims of the Armenian Genocide, and all of this was actively commented on in the central mass media. It was, in fact, the first mass speech with political demands in the territory of the post-war USSR, which was suppressed by law enforcement agencies on the same day. As it is known, Yakov Zarobyan, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia, resigned from his position as a result of those speeches, who had a great contribution to the national 'awakening' of the 1960s. At the same time, it is noteworthy that certain participants of the speeches were sentenced for several days for the so-called 'violation of public order and hooliganism', but there were no political trials or long-term sentences. I believe that one of the main reasons for this is that the leadership of Soviet Armenia in those years and those who participated in public speeches, as well as a significant number of those who did not, had similar approaches to national issues.

In the 1960s and later, the meaning of the strategy of scaring the Soviet authorities was based on the division of people into Soviet and anti-Soviet citizens, thus declaring citizens as anti-Soviet was accompanied by arrest and conviction under Articles² 65, 67,

² Criminal Code of the Armenian SSR. (As amended on March 1, 1987). Yerevan: Armenia, 1989.

69, and 206 in the previous version of the Criminal Code of the Armenian SSR³. Criminal punishment was drawn up on the basis of the so-called ‘agitation or propaganda in order to destroy or weaken Soviet power’.

From the end of 1962, the secret groups formed on the basis of the commonality of nationalist and anti-Soviet views became active in the Armenian society, which aimed to counter the totalitarian agitation and propaganda. In this regard, I would like to note that the activities of various groups and individuals are presented mainly on the basis of criminal cases against them⁴. It is clear that the real actions may not be complete in them, the so-called ‘anti-Soviet actions’ of this or that person may not be revealed. However, I think that with the existing archival materials, a general idea of their activities can be formed. In general, it is noticeable that one of the priority tasks set before the secret group was to raise the nationalist spirit among politically unstable people, as well as to activate their nationalist ideas and sentiments, in order to involve them in their field of activity.

Dissident groups and their supporters have organized periodic gatherings in Yerevan, Etchmiadzin and elsewhere, attended by 3 to 20 people⁵. In similar gatherings, they discussed issues of national unity, purchasing a printing press, development of the Armenian language, as well as a number of organizational issues. In that period, establishing ties with the Armenian Diaspora was considered key. It is appropriate to pay attention to the fact that the members of the dissident group were discussing the ideas of separating Soviet Armenia from the Soviet Union and creating an independent Armenian state. In order to coordinate the work between the organized groups, to direct these activities and to expand the secret work that has begun on a larger scale, the members of the group formed a management council in one of the gatherings. The latter was supposed to develop the plan of the organization, but the work remained unfinished due to the involvement of members of the secret group. For example, in May 1967, Sergey Melkonyan and Frunze Mkrtchyan were sentenced to 10 years in prison. They created a dissident group and united people, discussing with them the idea of creating an independent Armenian state and separating Armenia from the Soviet Union. It is worth noting that similar informal initiatives discussed the problems of the Leninist policy and social structure of the Soviet state. According to many of them, Armenia is a colonial state, and the Soviet government betrayed the national interests of the Armenian people, depriving them of the right to act in the international arena⁶. One of the steps to get out of that situation should be to cooperate with the political parties of the Armenian Diaspora and Western countries and create a nationwide front for a fair solution to the Armenian Question. A similar example was the Union of Armenian Youth formed in 1967 in School No. 3 in Yerevan, which consisted of 15 people and whose activities

³ After the independence of Armenia, on June 14, 1994, the Parliament adopted the Law of the RA “On Repressed Persons”, on the basis of which those people who were convicted for political reasons during the Soviet period were considered repressed.

⁴ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10652. Sheet 397. Sheet 399.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10649. Sheet 289-292. Sheet 306.

were considered anti-Soviet⁷. What is interesting here is the fact that a group to study Armenian history was created at the school, which developed a program and charter with the help of Zaven Harutyunyan, a scientific employee of Matenadaran. It is noteworthy that the group was to preserve historical memory and provide knowledge about Armenia to schoolchildren, which included questions about the cultural heritage of Karabakh and Nakhichevan⁸.

It is noteworthy that in 1967 he made a leaflet signed by the 'New Movement' group, where it was written, in particular, that it was necessary to unitedly fight against the racial chaos in the Soviet Union. And in one of the gatherings of that group, it was discussed that the Soviet society was going towards bourgeoisization, that the Soviet people and the intelligentsia had become devoid of ideas, calling on everyone to fight against it. The idea that the Soviet government violates the rights of the Armenian people in favor of Turkey was central to it, because the policy of assimilation and Russification of Armenians is being implemented in the Soviet Union, and the Armenian nation is being destroyed and morally destroyed⁹. Based on this, there was a call to take steps to preserve the Armenian cultural heritage in Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan, raising the issue of their unification with Armenia.

In 1967, the Union of Armenian Patriots also operated, which wanted to draw public attention to the fact that in the Soviet regime, national feelings were violated, the rights and interests of small nations were disregarded, the principles of democracy were violated, and the Armenian nation was "slowly moving towards moral destruction. It is called to demand the return of Armenian lands from Turkey"¹⁰.

The difference between the position of this group and the content of the illegal newspaper 'Paros' distributed by the National United Party at the same time is noteworthy, which proves that the idea of secession from the USSR was not very acceptable among the Armenian intelligentsia¹¹. This is also evidenced by the approaches of various groups and individuals, in which the issues of preservation of Armenian cultural heritage and reunification of historical lands, democratization of public order were the most prominent. However, it is noticeable that the Union of Armenian Patriots stands out from the existing dissident groups in terms of its number and organization. It is also noteworthy that a large number of students were included there, which also speaks of generational change and intellectual potential. It is difficult, of course, to accurately calculate the actual number of dissident groups, which, of course, were not fully disclosed during the trials. However, if we take the number of persons mentioned in the judgment as an approximate basis, it can be assumed that 40-50 people were involved in this organization.

⁷ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 11522. Sheet 204-214. Sheet 223. Sheet 224.

⁸ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10644. Sheet 371-375; Case 12313. Sheet 294-298.

⁹ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 12313. Sheet 64.

¹⁰ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10645. Sheet 352. Sheet 343-344.

¹¹ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10645. Sheet 345-346.

From the National United Party to the path to self-determination

Along with the activities of the Union of Armenian Patriots, in the mid-1960s, another dissident organization, the National United Party, was created and operated in Armenia, which had a significant impact on almost all dissidents operating in the republic after them. That group not only tried to establish an informal civil network-party, but also drew up the program, charter and text of the oath¹². Its leaders, Haykaz Khachatryan, Stepan Zatikyan and Shahan Harutyunyan, were sentenced to prison in 1969.

The National United Party was important for its members to be a part of the entire Armenian people, because thanks to the unity of the Armenian people, it can achieve its good goals and aspirations, being able to restore the lost national statehood and return the native land taken away from the Armenian people through the genocide¹³. Moreover, the National United Party considered its main task to liberate the nation from the foreign yoke, to get out of the slave domination of Russia, to make Armenia a free, independent, politically neutral republic¹⁴. It is noteworthy that in the illegal newspaper "Paros", which was the information source of that party, a series of articles about national revival were published. Those articles mainly contained the prerequisites for developing an independent Armenian state, criticizing the Marx-Leninist doctrine and the programs of the Communist Party. Considering the given difficult period, all this had a great impact on the dissident movement operating in the republic. Moreover, it received a significant response in a number of periodicals of the Diaspora, which actively covered the events of Soviet Armenia. The document approved by the party's governing body states that the party was organized in Yerevan in 1966, and Haykaz Khachatryan was its founder until 1968.

In 1968, Paruyr Hayrikyan actually became the head of the party. During the years 1967-1975, trials were held in the cases of that party, from which the peculiarity of the Armenian dissident thought became clear. The case also shows that the party tried to establish connections with other dissident groups operating in Armenia. From the judgments regarding some of them, we learn that at the beginning they always had meetings with each other and talked about the historical past of the Armenian people, its territories, as well as preserving the Armenian language and customs. In them, the situation created after the Sovietization of Armenia, in which the Armenian language was Russified and the historical and cultural interests of the Armenian people were violated, was always considered. Then they created a magazine 'For the Fatherland' and secretly printed 343 copies of that magazine already in 1968. It is noteworthy that the members of this group used code names for security purposes.

Thus, it can be concluded from the activities of the dissident groups operating in Armenia that already in the second half of the 1960s, the dissidents used certain steps of secrecy. In the documents prepared by them, it was stated that there was a communist despotism in the Soviet Union, there was no freedom and the Armenian people were

¹² The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10643. Sheet 428-429.

¹³ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10643. Sheet 35-37.

¹⁴ Ibid

being persecuted, as well as that the Bolsheviks had betrayed the interests of the Armenian people. Because of them, they called to fight against the reborn Bolshevik terror and dictatorial power in the Soviet state. Thus, in Armenia, as in other republics of the Soviet Union, the retreat of the so-called 'Khrushchev Thaw' was already noticeable (Warth 1960; Talvoja 2018; Ilic and Smith 2009). In the second half of the 1960s, the appearance of three new articles in the criminal codes of the USSR republics was directed against the dissident movements formed in the USSR: fabrication against the Soviet order, insult to the flag or coat of arms, and group actions that grossly disturb public order. Evidence of the strengthening of ideological pressure was also the fact that in July 1967, units to combat ideological subversion were created in the KGB (Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti or Committee of State Security) of the USSR. That ideological war and psychological war actually existed and it was mutually intransigent. It is also clear that the relevant bodies of the West could not be indifferent to the dissident movement formed in the USSR. It was manifested by many radio voices addressed to the socialist countries, moral and material support to that movement, etc. (Kukulin 2011). The fight against anti-Soviet manifestations becomes one of the tasks of the new units created in the KGB¹⁵. Unlike the massive illegal repressions that took place in the USSR in the 1930s, those in the 1960s were legal and never became massive. The new working style of the law enforcement agency is evidenced by the fact that, before the arrests, in most cases, they warned those exhibiting anti-Soviet behavior¹⁶.

The fact that the political persecutions were not of a mass nature can also be judged by the arrests and trials that took place on a union scale in the 1960s and 1970s. Of course, there were other manifestations of persecution of those who allowed ideological deviations in the country, but they did not end with imprisonment. As can be seen, the presence of 37 people convicted of anti-Soviet activities in Armenia in 1960-1970 was quite significant, even compared to the center. The dissident of Armenia was definitely of a national nature, the main demands of which were the reunification of Armenian lands, the protection of the integrity of the language and culture, as well as the creation of an independent Armenia. The national movement experienced a particularly great rise on the eve of 1965 and after that, which was the opportunity provided by the 'Khrushchev Thaw' (Talvoja 2018).

It is also noticeable that during those years attempts were made to unify, consolidate and direct the activities of secret groups¹⁷. It is still not possible to conclude unequivocally to what extent it was successful, but it is a fact that the devotees involved in that movement knew each other and knew to a certain extent about the processes taking place in that field in the republic. As can be seen, compared to the population of the republic, the number of dissidents is not so large, so it is difficult to assume that they could have a significant impact on the general political-ideological atmosphere.

¹⁵ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10558. Sheet 236-237; Case 10651. Sheet 377-381; Case 10654. Sheet 243-245.

¹⁶ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10602. Sheet 606-623. Sheet 628. Sheet 759; Case 10310. Sheet 168-178; Case 10603. Volume 12. Sheet 177-179; Case 10605. Sheet 300-306.

¹⁷ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10648. Sheet 208-212. Sheet 216.

Moreover, even among the groups, all of which were nationalist in nature, there was still some disagreement about the specific issues and tactics being pursued. In fact, not only those involved in dissent, but also a significant number of representatives of the intelligentsia and even the communist party elite were imbued with national ideas in Armenia. In that regard, let's add to the above the fact that Armenia was one of the unique republics whose Constitution stated that the Armenian language is also considered a state language along with Russian. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the population were Armenians certainly contributed to the preservation of national ideas in the republic. In other words, national ideas existed, existed and would exist in the following years, and the Armenian dissident movement formed in the 1960s could not have a significant impact in that regard. Not at all underestimating the importance of that activity of the movement, we believe that, nevertheless, the importance of their activity lay in the fact that they started a struggle against totalitarianism. It should be noted that the various dissident movements¹⁸ operating in the territory of the USSR did not and could not have a significant impact on the broad masses of society. In the Armenian version, it is also important that the issue of an independent state is raised in Armenian conditions, which is the happy wish of any nation. Speaking about it was already a new quality in the public life of the republic.

The rise and fall of the dissident movement 1970-1988

The overthrow of 'Khrushchev's Thaw' brought to power the more conservative wing of the ruling class, led by Leonid Brezhnev, in the totalitarian system of the Soviet Union. A number of researchers called the period of his leadership a period of stagnation, which does not quite correctly characterize that period of the history of the USSR, because it also contained elements of progress in quite a few spheres of economy, science and culture. During the years of his leadership, the idea of the need for stability was introduced into the Soviet reality. It was acceptable to both the elite and society as a whole. The former thereby got rid of the fear of being deprived of power at any moment, and the society was rightfully tired of the turbulent political events and wars that have been taking place since the beginning of the 20th century. Therefore, the period of Brezhnev rule is an outwardly stable period in the history of the Soviet country, which, however, was a noticeable setback compared to the revolutionary period of Khrushchev, especially in the ideological sphere. Brezhnev's team quickly took the path of suppression of dissent, significantly narrowing the scope of permissibility. As we have already mentioned, the dissident movement in Armenia was mainly of a nationalist nature, but at the end of May 1968, the human rights protection movement was also formed in the USSR, and then Helsinki groups were formed. Those political processes have their reactions in Armenia as well. It should be noted that the dissident movement in the USSR had quite violent manifestations, especially in the years 1970-1980, after which its decline began in the years 1980-1984. This is explained by a number of circumstances. The idea and content of the human rights activism of the 1960s and 1970s

¹⁸ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10599. Sheet 178. Sheet 272-278; Case 10650, Sheet 140-145.

consisted in the fact that it was almost entirely aimed at informing the public about the government's policy of suppressing the rights of citizens, which, thanks to the spread of 'Samizdat' and foreign radio voices, achieved its goal (Chatterjee 2017; Jhabvala 1985; Remington 1985, 1989). Society had accepted their value and critical statements, as can be concluded from the events of the second half of the 1980s.

The 1980s of the history of the Soviet Union have not yet been fully researched and analyzed. Naturally, it takes time to study and evaluate historical facts and events impartially. It was in that decade that Mikhail Gorbachev's perestroika began in the territory of the Soviet Union, which ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union (Bergman 1998; Boffa 1996). As Gorbachev, the initiator of perestroika, noted, the main goal of those unprecedented political processes taking place in the USSR was the broad democratization of the entire public life, which should decisively overcome the processes of stagnation and accelerate the social and economic development of society (Bacon 1992; Fireside 1989; Rhéaume 2008; Remington 1989). Moreover, it would be based on the creative potential of the masses, the acceleration of the development of the Soviet economy, the priority of science, the social sphere, and social justice. The task was to radically change the totalitarian system. The glasnost introduced in those years provided an opportunity for dissidents who had been working in secret until then to express themselves openly (Edelman 2001; Ellman 2002; Shtromas 1979).

The Soviet authorities again referred to the Stalinist repressions, in particular, on January 16, 1989, the decree of the Presidency of the Supreme Council of the USSR was published, which unanimously declared that those convicted based on the decisions of non-judicial bodies were considered acquitted. During that period, Andrei Sakharov and others were released from house arrest. In such political conditions, it became possible to raise national issues as well. In 1988, the Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh, which was annexed to Azerbaijan, raised the issue of leaving that republic and reuniting with Armenia. It received the support of the masses of the people in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, turning into a powerful national movement. Almost simultaneously, popular movements to leave the Soviet Union began in the Baltic republics.

Therefore, it is understandable that since the mid-1980s, dissent in the USSR, as they say, no longer had anything to do, and it, as a participant in political processes, objectively died out. It was also fully noticeable in the ongoing political developments in Armenia, where the national issue was always of primary importance. During the years of perestroika, the wave of national ideas accumulated in all classes of the Armenian people experienced a new rise¹⁹. It was a consequence of the developments of the Armenian dissident movement. According to the archives of the RA National Security Service, 29 people were convicted of anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda in 1970-1980, and 14 people were convicted in 1980-1988, and 10 of the latter were convicted in 1981, that is, the main activities were carried out²⁰.

¹⁹ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10559. Sheet 180; Case 10600, Sheet 239.

²⁰ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10646. Sheet 307. Sheet 326-327. Sheet 490-492. Sheet 461-473.

In the early 1970s, the first human rights organizations were created in the USSR. In 1970, the Committee of Human Rights in the USSR was founded in Moscow²¹. It was founded as an association of authors, which, according to Soviet laws, did not formally require the permission of the authorities or even a license (Jhabvala 1985, 461-473; Fairbanks 1989). It was the first independent public association formed in the USSR, which was part of the International League of Human Rights. It provided certain guarantees that its members would not be imprisoned. However, in 1972-1973, the totalitarian regime launched an active attack against the movement and most of its members were arrested. Not only for the world community, but also for the legal movement itself in the USSR, the signing of the final act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe by the USSR in 1975 was of great importance. In May 1976, physicist Yuri Orlov created a public group promoting the implementation of the Helsinki Agreement in the USSR, which included Yelena Bonner, Petro Grigorenko, Anatoly Shcharansky and others. It was followed by the creation of Helsinki groups in Ukraine, Lithuania, in 1977 in Georgia, Armenia. The Soviet authorities did not accept all that and in 1978 arrested 23 members of these groups and deported 7 people from the country.

In November 1974, Paruyr Hayrikyan, who had served his 4-year sentence in 1970 and had just returned to Armenia, stood before the court again. This time, in his verdict, it is stated that Hayrikyan did not change his political views during and after serving his sentence, and claims that he dedicated his life to the creation of a Free and Independent Armenia. Although he was kept under surveillance, he was in contact with Ashot Navasardyan, Azat Arshakyan, Ruben Khachatryan and others, who were later convicted and had anti-Soviet and nationalist views²². Let's pay attention to the fact that after returning from the detention center, Hayrikyan paid special attention to maintaining the norms of confidentiality, as well as to test the credibility of the members of the organization, he checked them with specific anti-Soviet actions²³, which was new for the Armenian dissident movement. Another remarkable circumstance is that Hayrikyan tried to send materials discrediting the USSR abroad from the detention center, in particular, for this purpose he sent a copy of his verdict to Andranik Margaryan information about those convicted in Armenia for anti-Soviet and nationalist activities, which were published in European countries. It is worth noting that Andranik Margaryan, who joined the National United Party in 1968, was also one of those figures who emphasized Armenia's future independence²⁴. It was also reflected in Margaryan's judgment and a number of his works. Despite this difficult situation, in 1970-1980, Ashot Navasardyan, Azat Arshakyan and Paruyr Hayrikyan revised the program and charter of the National

²¹ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10604. Sheet 295-298.

²² The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10647. Sheet 212-220; Case 10603. Sheet 401-405.

²³ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10604. Sheet 300-301.

²⁴ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10601. Sheet 243-249.

United Party, but did not finish it because of their arrest²⁵. Later, they managed to send the information about all that to the USA and European countries, which was widely used by Western European radio stations, as well as published in the mass media of the Armenian diaspora. There were mediated and indirect but stable communications between traditional Armenian parties and dissident groups operating in the Diaspora. The dissident actions had their ideological reactions on the Armenian world, all of which had the effort of unity. During that historical period, nationalistic literature was imported into Armenia in different ways, which was also acquired by dissidents. Two undeniable facts can be affirmed here. First, the active part of the society in Diaspora and Armenia was mainly guided by one national ideology, the cornerstone of which was the recognition of the Armenian Genocide by the civilized world. It was supposed to be followed by the re-creation of Independent, free and united Armenia. The other reality was that, especially in the 1970s, there was an increase in concrete steps for the above-mentioned goals, both in the Armenian world and in Soviet Armenia, which is a part of it. In this regard, it is appropriate to note that in April and September of 1981, a number of trials against Armenian dissidents took place in the Armenian SSR. Despite this direction, transformations of the Soviet dissident movement were noticeable in 1980-1984.

Dissent's transformations were conditioned by the strengthening of civil and political repression. In fact, it can be assumed that the dissident movements fulfilled their historical mission. It was mainly to raise awareness and knowledge about the suppression of civil rights and violation of human rights by the totalitarian authorities in the closed society, as well as about universal values. It is obvious that after 1985 the political events taking place in the space of the Soviet Union, the politically active and intelligentsia part of the society lived by these values. Moreover, at the end of 1970, it was noticeable that the KGB was brutally punishing the leaders of the dissident movement and their active followers, and the courts regularly handed down new sentences against the arrested dissidents. It naturally had a psychological effect on the dissident movement participants, keeping them in an atmosphere of fear.

In the 1990s, the cases of people accused of dissidents in Armenia during the Soviet years were reviewed. All of them were acquitted by the decisions of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Armenia, and the criminal cases were dismissed due to the lack of elements of the crime. It should be noted that already in February 1988, the Artsakh movement, unprecedented in the Armenian reality, started, which became the Armenian National Movement. In such conditions, the attitude of the still functioning Soviet authorities towards civil activists and intelligentsia convicted for political reasons was quite controversial. A good example of this was the criminal case initiated against Paruyr Hayrikyan for political reasons in July 1988. It was connected with the activation of popular movements, under the conditions of which Paruyr Hayrikyan founded the 'Union for National Self-Determination' in September 1987 and published "Independence" weekly newspapers.

²⁵ The Fund of Discontinued Cases of the Archive of the National Security Service of the RA. Case 10600. Sheet 242-243; Case 10641. Sheet 369.

Conclusion and discussion

During the years of the totalitarian system of the USSR, there were civic activists and groups in it that opposed the dominance of the dominant bureaucracy and non-humanistic tendencies in political life, both at the Soviet and at the republican level. Protest activity to a certain extent contributed to the radical changes in the economic and political system of the USSR that followed in the mid-1980s. It was a struggle for the establishment of liberal forms and values in Soviet society, the establishment of a dialogue between it and the political elite.

A comparative analysis of dissent in Soviet Armenia has political significance and a civilized dimension. This allows us to trace the evolution of relations between the authorities and society during the years of the growing systemic crisis of totalitarianism. In the Armenian SSR and other republics, the reasons for the dissatisfaction of the intelligentsia of the Soviet society with political and cultural development were revealed. For the post-Soviet Armenian society, it is important to show the origins of the formation and manifestation of dissent among a small group of intelligentsia, for which the term dissidents have been assigned.

The historical lessons of opposition resistance in the Armenian SSR should be used in the process of achieving a dialogue between public authorities and civil society at the present stage of Armenia's development. The construction of a civilized dialogue is part of the political stability of the Armenian society, the continued strengthening of its integration and democratic potential.

Armenian dissidence developed as oppositional protest actions of a part of the society aimed at public criticism of public policy and social order, leading to an open conflict with the public authorities and their repressive reaction. Nevertheless, samizdat has become the most historically significant way, from the point of view of the formation of a dissident mentality, to distribute artistic and cultural texts bypassing censorship. Samizdat became a form of individual self-expression and self-realization; it was an independent creative process carried out outside the settings of official structures. For the province, the spread of samizdat became one of the most important factors in the formation of dissent, including in the Armenian SSR.

In the mid-1960s and early 1980s, openly and definitely disagreement with the political course of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union expressed only a small part of the Soviet intelligentsia of the capitals and large cities, which formed a real dissident movement. I am sure that a political study of dissident movements should be carried out in order to make timely decisions, prevent crises and understand the legitimate demands of their citizens by public authorities. Moreover, for the ruling political elite, it is key to understand the importance of various aspects of the dialogue between public authorities and civil society, to see the problems and prospects for such interaction.

Dissidence reflects any deviation from the ideological dictate in an explicit or covert form, regardless of subsequent repressive measures of the authorities. Therefore, in this work, I took into account the following typology of the dissident movement: a) civil movements, which included the movement for human rights, socialists and participants in the speeches for social and economic rights; b) national movements; c) religious

movements; d) the movement of creative people in the field of culture and intellectuals in the field of science.

Thus, ideological diversity was observed among dissidents, but their common distinguishing feature was the protection of individual rights, requiring the totalitarian authorities to comply with the Constitution and laws of the Soviet Union.

Further research, dealing with the topic of civil society and public authorities and reconstructing the experience of the past, will make it possible to critically assess the events that took place in the past and the phenomena that are taking place at the present stage. The guarantees of rights and freedoms enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia must always be observed by the state, as demanded by the dissidents.

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ROUTES TO A RESILIENT EUROPEAN UNION, EDITED BY ANTONINA
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REVIEW BY: VLADIMIR MARTIROSYAN 

Abstract

At the present stage of geopolitical confrontation, the resilience of the political system of the EU is based on the position that the formation of a single social and institutional space allows EU member states to compete more successfully within the global economic system. In the practice of supranational regulation of economic integration, a set of methodological approaches has developed today, where the central place is occupied by the principles of removing barriers to trade within the integration bloc and to the implementation of agreed economic specialization. The most important competitive advantage of regional economic integration is the growth of the global competitiveness of the most efficient enterprises and sectors of the economy of the EU member states due to the spatial expansion of sales markets and the growth of trade.

This book summarizes that the only way to integrate in the current conditions remains integration at different speeds, with an individual approach to each new participating country. The end result of the concept of Europe at different speeds is the accession of all participating countries to the leading group, since all members of the integration group pursue common goals and wish to achieve them by common efforts. The sooner all participating countries find themselves in the same plane of economic and political coordinates, the sooner the set goals will be achieved and key tasks will be solved.

Keywords: European Union Politics, Societal Resilience, European labour markets, Ageing in Europe, EU Climate Policy, Coronavirus 19 Pandemics.

The resilient effect of the considered factors led to the creation of the EU, which is a key actor in the global market. At present, the EU is a single market space functioning through a common supranational system of institutional regulation of the processes of social and economic sustainable development. As the main feature of the European

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experience of foreign economic integration, one can single out the fact that, on the basis of the initial coordination of trade policy measures, integration in the political, social and other spheres has become largely possible. It should also be noted the diversity of trade regulation tools in the EU and the presence of certain specifics of their application in relation to certain groups of countries, including new member countries.

The integration process, according to the theory of the security community, takes place in the economic plane, including certain stages of economic integration, starting with the customs union and ending with monetary and political unions. Within the framework of this theory, the issues of improving integration mechanisms are put on the agenda in order to equitably distribute not only certain benefits received by the participants in the integration process, but also various kinds of costs that arise for states in connection with the entry into new political and economic realities caused by integration. The relevance of this problem is due to the fact that the integration of states is considered by various experts as a dual phenomenon, containing both positive and negative consequences for the countries participating in this process. The most common view is that developed countries often experience negative consequences from integration with less developed countries. While the latter, in turn, benefit from rapprochement with more economically successful countries. However, today there is still no consensus on this issue, which remains open and is of interest for study in the framework of the study of the mechanisms, ways and processes of integration., takes place in the economic plane, including certain stages of economic integration, starting with the customs union and ending with monetary and political unions. Within the framework of this theory, the issues of improving integration mechanisms are put on the agenda in order to equitably distribute not only certain benefits received by the participants in the integration process, but also various kinds of costs that arise for states in connection with the entry into new political and economic realities caused by integration. The relevance of this problem is due to the fact that the integration of states is considered by various experts as a dual phenomenon, containing both positive and negative consequences for the countries participating in this process. The most common view is that developed countries often experience negative consequences from integration with less developed countries. While the latter, in turn, benefit from rapprochement with more economically successful countries. However, today there is still no consensus on this issue, which remains open and is of interest for study in the framework of the study of the mechanisms, ways and processes of integration.

Current trends in the economic development of the EU countries are largely determined by the processes of expanding and deepening the integration process in Europe, including in the field of domestic trade. Despite the principle of homogeneity that determines the regulation of the European economic space, which involves minimizing disproportions in the social and economic development of the leading EU countries and new member countries. In this context, the lines of the European center and periphery were formed (Bakardjieva Engelbrekt, Ekman, Michalski and Oxelheim 2022). Nevertheless, the study of the achievements of European integration and the experience of trade relations within the bloc is of great interest and is of scientific importance as a source of practical experience for the theoretical substantiation of the formation of the trade policy of the EaP countries in the context of expanding political,

social and economic integration processes. The need to improve the mechanisms of European political and economic integration actualizes the importance of a detailed study of modern world practice and adaptation to the post-Soviet specifics of the most effective instruments of foreign trade regulation in the form of a wide range of tariff and non-tariff measures. It is important that the EU, despite the aggravation of the foreign policy situation, remains the main trading partner of the EaP countries and the prospects for EU enlargement will certainly affect the structure of foreign trade between Russia and Turkey. Based on this, there is a need to study the trends and contradictions in the development of foreign trade relations of the new EU member states as a factor in the expansion of European integration (Elert and Henrekson 2022, 15-38; Bäckstrand 2022, 39-61).

In the era of global geopolitical changes, tense geo-economic situation, the viability of the EU will primarily be determined by the consistency of the processes of deepening and expanding integration, as well as the rational use of the concepts of 'center and periphery', as well as different-speed development, which ensure a balance within the integration bloc in the conditions of modern realities, due to historical background (Langlet 2022, 63-88). From the point of view of the geography of commodity flows, a certain asymmetric exchange is taking place: the 'old' countries of Western Europe, accepting 'new' EU member states on tough conditions, are expanding markets for their industrial products and high-tech services. For the population of the new EU member states, cheap consumer loans are considered as advantages, and for businesses, targeted investments in industries chosen by the EU governing bodies, as well as external effects from the implementation of infrastructure projects by Western European companies (Bengtsson 2022, 89-113; Mattsson 2022, 115-139).

A significant contradiction of the change in foreign trade specialization and the geography of commodity flows in Europe for the old EU members was the unlimited migration of labor within a single space. The unemployed citizens of the new EU member states work as unskilled specialists and laborers in the 'old' countries and transfer part of their earnings to their homeland. At present, the functioning of the pan-European labor market according to a similar scheme is causing increasing concern in the context of the admission of new candidate countries to the EU and the wave of refugees from the Middle East and Africa.

The development of the world economy remains a topical issue of transforming the sovereignty of states participating in the processes of globalization and integration. In particular, this problem is acute for the EU integration bloc, whose member countries transfer their powers to the supranational level. At the same time, there is an opinion according to which EU members do not renounce sovereignty, but only on the basis of their own decision in their own interests, they undertake to submit to EU institutions. At the same time, EU members implement the idea of united sovereignties, that is, they have the ability to control and jointly determine the decision-making process within the EU (Borevi, 195-218; Sjödin and Wadensjö 2022, 219-244). Further, in connection with the natural formation of influential elites, groups and the allocation of individual significant personalities within the European Communities, a political science approach to the study of the integration process in Europe was formed. Gradually, during the transformation of this theory, political and economic groups, social elites and individuals

come to the fore as the main actors (Forssbäck 2022, 141-167; Bergström 2022, 169-193). Thus, the mechanism, degree and depth of integration are determined by the actors of the integration process and their political culture.

The theoretical significance of this book is to identify new trends in the political, social, trade and economic interaction of 'old' and 'new' EU member states. In this sense, the following are important: 1) in the theoretical substantiation of the consequences of EU enlargement for the foreign trade of Russia and Turkey; 2) in deepening knowledge about the theoretical aspects of European integration; 3) the main scientific conclusions can become the basis for further research into the forms and mechanisms of formation and regulation of foreign trade relations of countries within the integration bloc in the context of globalization.

The practical significance of this work lies in the fact that the theoretical substantiation of the resilient consequences of the EU enlargement for the foreign trade of the EaP countries is the basis for developing a system of practical recommendations for maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative consequences for the European integration of the EaP countries. In the context of the dynamics of the formation of a single European political, social and economic space, a comparative analysis is carried out and the main competitive advantages that form the strategic choice of potential EU member states are highlighted.

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REVIEW BY: HAYKUHI MKRTCHYAN *

Abstract

The modern system of international security and the doctrine of the balance of power is going through a difficult period of exacerbation of geopolitical contradictions associated with a new redistribution of zones of influence. As a result of these processes, a significant increase in instability is observed in many regions, which actualizes the problem of the military security of states. Despite the global transformations of the world system, the potential of military force is still considered one of the most effective factors in world politics.

The emergence of new technologies of confrontation, the expansion of the range of possibilities for destructive influence through peaceful means, primarily of an informational nature, require revision and modernization of the UN security system. It is necessary to take measures to counter threats of an information nature, the object of which is both military infrastructure and public consciousness. In connection with the emergence of a new information reality, the study of the specifics of the military security system of modern countries is of great civilized significance.

Since 2014, the UN structure and collective security have faced serious geopolitical challenges and threats due to the revival of its key role in the system of international relations, its desire to restore the international law of peace and security. Obviously, in the conditions of the new reality in modern wars, preference is given to both military and non-military technologies, the parallel use of which has a powerful destructive potential for communicative and informational impact on public consciousness, carried out with the help of cyberspace, social networks, the media and the Internet. Because of this, geopolitical actors today prefer hybrid methods of war, as well as the widespread use of information technology capabilities to inflict damage on the enemy. In this context, the totality of modern geopolitical challenges and threats in the new information reality can be characterized as a hybrid war, which includes a wide range of actions aimed at destroying all spheres of the rival country's social life.

Keywords: international security, balance-of-power doctrine, politics of equidistance, international intervention logics, collaborative regional orders, strategic autonomy, multilateral

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system thinking, anticipatory governance, two-track peacekeeping, UN framework, collective security, international law of peace and security.

Hybrid wars today are becoming the main tool of geopolitical confrontation, which actualizes the search for countering such threats. If earlier military security was limited solely to quantitative indicators of the country's combat capability, then in the new information reality, the country's military security strategy requires different approaches to the development and implementation of measures to organize the country's security system and take into account the specifics of its various segments. Thus, the total militarization of the world system, the aggravation of numerous contradictions that entail protracted conflicts, place increased demands on the UN system and the country's military security.

In this book, the author considers the armed forces of the state not only as the most important institution of public authority, but also as a social institution that ensures the sustainable development of society. In this understanding, the armed forces are, along with the state, an actor in ensuring the military security of society (Werther-Pietsch 2022, 9-22, 23-41). An analysis of theoretical approaches indicates that various directions have developed in the study of military security, which offer their own methodological foundations for understanding this problem. In modern scientific knowledge, sufficient attention is paid to the issues of military security of states, the most theoretically developed are aspects related to individual structural elements of the military security system (strategic, political, technological, social, etc.).

In modern international conditions, many political contradictions are aggravated, new threats and challenges to peace and security on the planet appear, and the geopolitical confrontation between leading international actors makes it difficult to solve the problems of sustainable development of the world as a whole. In this regard, the significance and role of the UN as the leading world organization and global political institution is growing (Werther-Pietsch 2022, 43-63, 65-85, 89-100). The states of the planet pin their hopes on the UN as an institution that is able to stop destructive processes, fairly regulate relations between nations, prevent conflicts on the planet, promote global sustainable development and the lagging economies of individual countries. The UN is criticized for outdated practices and structures, for inadequate responses to modern challenges and threats, for a decline in authority in world affairs, and for the lack of legitimacy of decisions made. These questions and problems testify to the crisis of the UN and require a deep scientific analysis, as a result of which it is necessary to get answers to the identified questions and try to develop specific measures to improve the activities of the UN and eliminate justified shortcomings (Werther-Pietsch 2022, 101-122, 125-142). Changes in the UN are overdue, but since the submission of documents on reform projects in 1993, nothing has fundamentally changed in the organization. For the third decade now, the most important, pivotal organ of the organization of the Security Council has not been reformed. Throughout this time, serious attempts to resolve this issue have been made several times, but no results have been achieved. The acuteness of the problem is added by intrastate armed conflicts, respectively, the mechanism for the settlement of which is not spelled out in the UN

Charter. Due to such conflicts, the volume of armed violence in the world does not decrease. Therefore, in connection with the general deterioration of the world situation and the high importance of the UN in world politics, it seems relevant to subject the activities of the UN system to political analysis, to find a political explanation for the existing problems and contradictions (Werther-Pietsch 2022, 143-167).

Global sustainable development programs that are promoted through the UN are gaining popularity on the world agenda. However, tangible results in solving many social and economic issues have not been achieved. The problem of underdevelopment of a significant number of countries and the gap between the levels of development of lagging economies in comparison with developed economies is not narrowing. In addition, this area of application of the efforts of the UN has not been sufficiently analyzed in scientific research, and an objective description of this type of activity has not been given.

The author makes a comparative analysis and identifies international structures, which include only the governments of sovereign states. The conclusion is substantiated that the multilateral nature of these organizations is both its disadvantage and advantage. The disadvantage is the difficulty in reaching agreement in making the necessary decisions, since the interests of the participating countries can strongly contradict each other, introducing disagreements in the formation of common positions. At the same time, if an agreement is reached between the members of the organization, progressive decisions can be made and international measures can be developed that will positively affect a wide range of global international problems, issues and situations (Werther-Pietsch 2022, 169-172, 173-175).

Developments in institutional theory and political realism offer various models for building military, political, and economic multilateral structures. Liberal institutionalism, critical theory and the theory of collective security as separate trends within the institutional paradigm shift the focus to those aspects of analysis that they consider more important and provide more explanatory opportunities for analyzing objective international reality (Werther-Pietsch 2022, 177-180). However, in reality, institutionalists prefer to bypass weaknesses in their theoretical constructions, but strengthen their developments of the economic aspects of the behavior of states in multilateral structures.

The author comes to the conclusion that the theory of political realism has the most complete explanatory possibilities, and states tend to join international structures for a certain time, until the possibilities to realize their national interest in them are exhausted. The theory of collective security, although it is considered as a desirable model for the interaction of states in matters of military and political security, is still subject to the influence of factors that weaken this mechanism and can lead the collective security system to become ineffective. The balance of power model stands out as the most realistic, as it is consistent with the idea of a multipolar world order, which is promoted by the UN at the international level. In the context of the problem of the struggle for international peace and security, the author considers the possibilities for the international community in maintaining peace on the planet. It is noted that many contradictions and interests of states, as the main actors of politics, woven into the fabric of international interactions, turn the UN Security Council into a platform for the struggle for influence on the adoption of certain decisions on security issues. An attempt is made

to identify the most important and promising areas for reforming the Security Council and adjusting the UN approaches in peacekeeping practice.

Regarding the transformation of the UN approaches in the field of peacekeeping, the author consistently reveals the key attempts to update the UN approaches to peacekeeping issues (Werther-Pietsch 2022, 169-172,173-175). Based on the UN doctrinal documents on peacekeeping and modern theoretical developments on the problems of conflict resolution, the features of the changes proposed in the concept of the responsibility to protect are analyzed. This may have marked the beginning of two new UN approaches to peacekeeping: peacekeeping operations and post-conflict peacebuilding. Conceptually substantiates the need to strengthen the collective principle in the UN peacekeeping practice and a new understanding of the restoration of the foundations of life support in post-conflict territories, understood as something more than the absence of a state of war. It justifies the need to strengthen the leading role of the UN in resolving conflicts in cases where a negotiation process is possible, the need to strengthen responsibility for developing a specific political solution and initiative to formulate a compromise for the conflicting parties. The conclusion is substantiated that these political components of the conflict resolution process are a promising direction for adapting the UN peacekeeping system to changing world conditions. Obviously, reforming the UN in the 21st century means developing projects for changes in the organization in all areas of activity that will affect the entire complex of bodies, structural divisions and institutions of the UN system. A systematic approach will make it possible to embrace the changes of the UN as a global and universal international organization, as a multifunctional organism, taking into account the interconnection of key areas, while maintaining positive practices and carrying out the necessary innovations.

A comparative study of the problems of the UN contributes to the development of the theory of international relations in the section on international organizations as the second most important actors in world politics after states. Within the framework of new scientific developments, a more in-depth study of certain areas or problems of reforming the UN system is possible. The development of international politics is accompanied by the emergence of new contradictions and the exacerbation of old ones. The UN, as a universal organization, has unique powers and political influence on the outcome of conflict situations, the preservation of peace on the planet, and is largely able to promote development, provided that its approaches and practices are reformed.

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RECONCILIATION, HERITAGE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
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REVIEW BY: VAHRAM PETROSYAN 

Abstract

The idea of reconciliation, heritage and social inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa has been in the spotlight for many decades, as both regions constantly present such dramatic changes that reverberate around the world. In both regions, the geopolitical interests of world and regional powers are closely intertwined, and energy reserves allow you to influence the level of prices for them. In fact, all this becomes the reason for the acute manifestation of religious conflicts, the politicization of religion and tradition, thereby creating a turbulent environment for many actors. It is also worth mentioning the unresolved issues of nation-building and nation-states, the diversity of the ethnic and religious composition of the population in many places, the uneven distribution of income in societies, the level of militarization, and much more, to present the complexity and anxiety of the overall picture.

The results of the chain of revolutions that took place in these regions did not solve almost any of the urgent problems in any of the countries and at the same time caused a systemic earthquake, a series of coups, civil wars, interventions, as well as unrelenting confrontation in society, leading to rampant terror and repression. Based on a comprehensive theoretical study of the phenomenon of reconciliation, heritage and social integration, this collection of articles presents a deep analysis of events in the Middle East and North Africa, summarizes the results of the previous development of this region, and reveals the causes of social and political failures. The main conclusions of the articles lead the reader to the conclusion that turbulence in both regions is the beginning of a new process that has embraced the reconfiguration of the modern world-system.

This book contains many interesting facts, generalizations and points of view. Therefore, it will be interesting and useful not only for social scientists, but also for everyone interested in the problems of systemic transformations in the Middle East and North Africa.

Keywords: Middle East, North Africa, statehood, sovereignty, conflict, dialogue, peacebuilding, transition, security sector, cybersecurity, social justice, social harmonization, humanitarian aid, local heroes, ethnic diversity.

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The idea of an inclusive process of reconciliation in the midst of a conflict (AlDajani 2022), international economic integration, as the most pronounced trend in the world economy, embraced the modern world-system and, having spread first in Western Europe, continued to expand in developing countries. They also include the Arab states of the Middle East and North Africa, which have become a testing ground for regional and subregional organizations, various integration blocs. The trend towards the emergence of a new prospect for resolving the conflict situation in the Middle East and North Africa has been outlined (AlDajani 2022; Dietrich 2022; Leiner 2022), in many respects, due to the effectiveness of multilateral trade negotiations. With the increase in the number of regional agreements, a new approach has emerged in integration theory, according to which a number of bilateral regional agreements are more effective than global regulatory mechanisms (Dietrich 2022; Leiner 2022).

The integration of the Arab countries into the international trading system is a difficult process, the study of which plays an important role in understanding the current situation and the subsequent development of the customs and tariff policy, as well as the foreign trade policy strategies of the countries participating in world trade. With an increase in population in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, problems associated with labor migration have become acute. Firstly, there is an outflow of the working-age population to the more developed countries of the South and the countries of the North, in particular to the EU Member States. Secondly, illegal migration is becoming a serious problem. In response, a number of measures are being taken to help overcome the difficulties associated with labor migration. Understanding the current situation is also an important task for the world community, since its significance in the world economy is very high in the context of ongoing globalization processes and in the formation of transnational economic relations.

Modern North Africa plays an important role in political, economic and cultural relations between states. The voice of the North African countries is sounding more and more firmly and confidently from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly, influencing the adoption of resolutions on a number of international problems, especially those relating to the hot spots of the planet. The countries of the African continent differ in civilizational characteristics, level and pace of development. However, when it comes to armed conflicts, they have a lot in common: the mass death of innocent people, the suffering of women and children, the problems in refugee camps, hunger and death from the lack of food, medicine and proper social security. Often, mass displacement of people provokes local conflicts of a religious and ethnic nature. The emerging contradictions, piling up on each other, carry a threat to security and the danger of escalation of conflicts.

The consequences of armed conflicts are catastrophic. Irreparable damage is being done to the economy, culture, education, political and humanitarian spheres, the ecological system is degrading, homelessness and crime are growing, and the sanitary situation in cities is deteriorating. Even more tragic are the human losses and the growing number of refugees (Tacchini 2022; Elayah and Ahmed 2022; Dama 2022). There are even more displaced persons who have not left their countries. They have lost their homes, jobs, sources of income, and are forced to leave unharvested crops in the fields. Refugees are also a problem for host states, as recipients are forced to take funds from their own meager budget to keep refugees from starving to death. Their camps become

not only hotbeds of disease, crime, illegal trade in weapons and drugs, but also often a field of armed clashes with the population living there. That is why the tasks of maintaining peace and security do not leave the agenda of the African Union, the EU, the UN, and regional summits. Despite the efforts of the world community, it has not yet been possible to prevent conflicts. It will probably take a long time to resolve this problem, since wars are usually fought over strategic raw materials that bring high profits to international consortiums. In this regard, the likelihood of recurrences of overt or latent confrontation remains high.

Modern geopolitical processes are characterized by a high degree of complexity and unpredictability for Yemen (Elayah and Ahmed 2022). This state of international relations speaks of a serious crisis in the entire existing system of world regulation. This is evidenced, among other things, by the tendency associated with the rooting in international relations of unilateral, bypassing the UN Charter, military responses to reports of atrocities and gross violations of human rights. Unilateral military measures are increasingly being taken even before all the facts have been established by the international community, in accordance with agreed and approved procedures. Such practices only exacerbate the emergency conditions and the crisis of sovereignty in Yemen (Elayah and Ahmed 2022), in which elements of chaos and violence in the global community are born and spread. In their extreme expression, they can threaten global security, world peace and such achievements as humanity, sociality and international legal mechanisms for the protection of human rights. Against this background, multilateral efforts and steps by individual states to strengthen the systemic foundations of international relations, primarily to uphold the observance of the UN Charter and the principles of the work of the UN approved in it, are of particular relevance. The urgency of the threats affecting humanity as a whole increases the importance of humanitarian diplomacy, humanitarian assistance and cooperation in modern international relations.

The actual context in which human security challenges come to the fore on the international agenda is far more complex than in previous decades. This is the reason for the significant interest in humanitarian issues in the political science of international relations and the variety of approaches to its definition and study (Peña 2022; Aldajani 2022; Alnwairan, Aldajani and Alshraideh 2022; Abu-Zayed, Alzaghou, Aldajani and Alshraideh 2022). Meanwhile, international humanitarian cooperation has firmly established itself in political science, which traditionally includes relations in the media, science, education, tourism, culture, sports, youth exchanges, etc.

At the same time, it is obvious that the humanitarian component of modern international relations is a much larger and more complex phenomenon. If international humanitarian cooperation, by definition, cannot lead to an aggravation of interstate contradictions, then the politicization of humanitarian issues that is observed today, on the contrary, often leads to an aggravation of relations between two or more actors in international relations and destabilizes the world system. Such an effect is produced by humanitarian interventions and military interventions with an appeal to the responsibility to protect, which have become a prominent phenomenon in today's international relations. Humanitarian diplomacy is based on the principles of independence, neutrality, non-partisanship and includes actors of various nature in the negotiation process: countries, intergovernmental organizations, CSOs, business and other actors.

In 2011, events took place in the Middle East, which later received the generally accepted name of the Arab Spring. These events had a great impact on almost all Arab states and their further political development, and in some cases completely changed the existing political regimes. Protest movements and actions for the states of the Middle East throughout their history cannot be called an exceptional phenomenon, and after a series of mass demonstrations leading to a change in the ruling regime, they look like a relatively familiar phenomenon. However, in terms of the intensity of events, specific forms of political action and the consequences for the entire region of the Middle East and North Africa, the Arab Spring has become an outstanding phenomenon. In particular, all this manifests itself in the legacy of Christian public figures and social justice in the Middle East (Sensenig 2022). Which of the characteristic features of the development of the region can be considered the main reasons for the presence of a crisis potential in it?

First, geopolitically, it is located at the intersection of Europe, Asia and Africa, that is, the three largest world regions. This position of his for a long time provoked powerful world powers to try to establish control over him. With some regularity, such attempts occurred with the use of military force. The number of armed conflicts in the Middle East over the past half century has significantly exceeded their number in other regions of the world.

Second, noteworthy is the fact that, throughout human history, the Middle East has been the origin of both Christianity and Islam. Both in the past and in recent history, this has become a breeding ground for religious conflicts and clashes.

Thirdly, there are countries in the region with differences in economic development, social and cultural aspects. In addition, each of them has specific features of the structure of political regimes and nuances of the social organization of society.

Fourth, the discovery of large oil reserves in individual countries of the region has further increased the role of the Middle East in the global economy. However, the focus on the export of hydrocarbon resources makes such countries dependent on the situation on world markets and creates conditions for strategic economic instability. The development of social and political crisis phenomena in the region at the present stage can be due, along with internal and external geopolitical factors, to this instability.

In addition, the internal processes taking place in the states of this region have regularly influenced and continue to influence the geopolitical situation in the world. In this regard, events in the region often have an impact on the situation in countries beyond its borders.

This situation calls for close attention and scrupulous analysis of the above transformational processes in the Middle East and North Africa and their consequences in order to determine their impact both in the near and in the longer term on a regional and global scale. First of all, this concerns the Arab Spring, which is understood as a wave of demonstrations and coups that took place in the Arab world, due to many interconnected global, regional and national factors, both social, demographic, economic, political, technological, cultural, and the level of claims, the realization of the need in political freedom, dissatisfaction with the authoritarian political regime, readiness for mass protests, delegitimization of power (Meyers 2022; Diab 2022; Sarrouj 2022; Merza and Muneam 2022). In some cases, the reaction of traditionalism to

liberalization acquired the features of radicalization, which the Arab regimes were not ready to confront under the new conditions. Citizens perceived some political leaders as unattainable and corrupt, while against their background, others who looked deeply committed to religion enjoyed greater preference (Abu-Nimer 2022; Hassan 2022; Lahmamed 2022; Pena 2022; Salahat 2022; Mulugeta Woldegiorgis 2022). Against the background of regional instability, the struggle for leadership between such important states as Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia has intensified, which see in the current situation a chance to strengthen their influence and provide themselves with greater opportunities to control resources and ensure their own national security (Alashqar 2022; Rullansky 2022).

The instability and anarchy established in some countries of the studied region served as fertile ground for the growth of organized crime, drug trafficking, human and arms trafficking. The widespread Islamization and general radicalization of the region deserve special attention, which eventually turned into a significant threat to international security, requiring decisive measures. At the domestic political level, social and political crises led to the fall or significant transformation of a number of ruling regimes in the region under study, but at the same time did not lead to significant democratization, or even to the solution of the problems that caused them. In some countries, armed conflicts have become a reality, which have led to the formation of gray areas beyond the control of legitimate authorities, or have caused the actual collapse of statehood.

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